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THE "LITTLE GIRL" SERIES.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW YORK.

HANNAH ANN : A SEQUEL.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD BOSTON.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD PHILADELPHIA.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD WASHINGTON.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW ORLEANS.

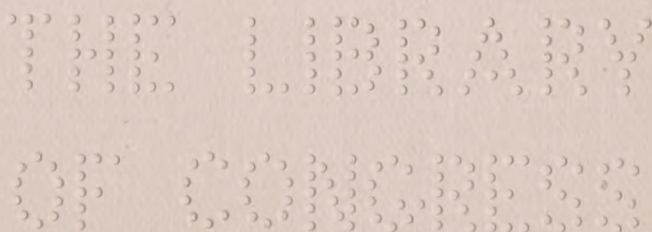
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW ORLEANS

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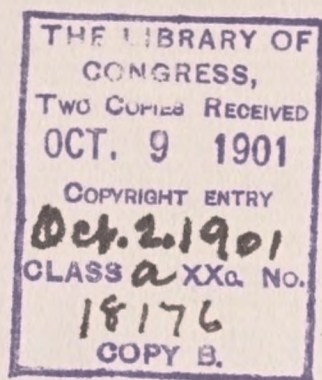
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OF SILENCE," ETC.



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INSCRIBED TO
NINO FOSTER

A little girl comes with a silent grace,
And with her old-time story begs a little place;
And brings a greeting from a kindly friend,
Who from thought's garden culls a flower to send.

A. M. D.

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A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW ORLEANS

CHAPTER I.

A LITTLE BRIDE.

"QUICK! Quick! I can feel my strength running out of my veins like a swift river. Raise me up, and—the drops! Bring them in at once. What does it matter if it is a priest in whom we do not believe! The marriage will be less likely to be disputed. Ah, if I could see my son, my love, my treasure, my idol! But that cannot be! Then I will do all I can for him."

The voice had been thin and shrill, and pitched on a high key almost like a scream. Now it sank faint and gasping, and the head fell back on the pillow, buried in the silken ruffles.

"*O mon Dieu!* She is gone——"

"I am not gone!" The eyes opened like two gleams of fire in surrounding darkness, and on the cheeks came a dull red spot, while the rest of the face was livid, and the lips a blue line. Yet in the sunken eyes a dominant will was plainly visible. "My drops—quick!" she commanded.

The attendant held the bottle up to the light. Its contents were at a very low ebb. She poured out half a dozen drops. There could be but one more dose. She gave it to the dying woman, but for some moments the result was doubtful.

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The room was in an old château that had known many a romance before, and more than one crime. It was large and dull now, with its faded hangings and massive furniture that in its day had been very handsome, and spoke of more than one reign of kings. Now royalty lay in prison, and many a heart was filled with dread. The high post bedstead could be shut in with its silken curtains, that were stretched apart to the uttermost, to let in every breath of air. The woman was barely at middle life, but haggard and worn to the last degree by disease.

When the remedy took effect it appeared miraculous. The face flushed all over and seemed to quiver as with an electric shock. She raised herself by a strong effort of will. The nurse pushed the pillows at her back.

"Will they never come?" impatiently.

"Madame, the priest is here."

"Then bring them all in."

The voice sounded strangely clear. The eyes were fixed on the arched door-way with its faded hangings and heavy, tarnished fringe that had once glittered in golden lights.

A small procession entered the apartment, headed by the priest, a tall, austere personage in whose face craftiness was held in abeyance by a certain assumed meekness. Next came a beautiful girl of sixteen or so, leading by the hand a child of five or six, a fair-haired little being with a sweet face, now full of curiosity. She was gowned in a flowing robe of satin and lace, festooned to allow the childish figure some freedom of movement, while the long train followed her in shining billows, touched with a certain transparent shimmering by the veil, with a crown of orange blossoms, many of them set with diamonds. The child seemed all elation in her unusual attire.

Back of her walked a tall, well-grown young fellow

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not much, if any, older than the girl. A fine, spirited face, for all its youth; large dark eyes that had a useful quality of looking blank on certain occasions—eyes with the gift of seeing but not revealing all they saw. His hair was very dark too, with the purplish tints, and curling, and there was a delicate shading on the beautifully curved upper lip. The complexion was fine and healthy, with a tint of pink in the boyish cheeks.

“Do not wait a moment,” entreated the tremulous voice. “Father Mambert, you know what is demanded of you. Proceed at once, Angelique, lead her up here, close by me——”

The child shrank back suddenly, and her blue eyes dilated with a flash of terror as the thin, pallid hand was stretched out. But the next instant it dropped on the bed, helpless.

“O, you need not be afraid. It is only to promise to your dear Gervaise. Begin, Sir Priest.”

There had entered back of the bridal procession two servitors of the better class, intelligent, well-bred and grave. The woman led the little one forward and placed her hand in that of Gervaise, when she glanced up and smiled. Angelique Saucier stood at her side.

“It is your wish, Madame, nay, your command, that I unite Sylvie Perrier in marriage by proxy to Monsieur de Brienne?” began the priest.

“It is my son’s wish as well as my own. Gervaise, you understand? You marry Sylvie for my son Hugh. You solemnly swear to convey her to Canada, Quebec,—my mind is a little confused about names. You will find him and deliver to him his wife. Swear it—loyally, valiantly, to a dying mother.”

“God helping me, I will search faithfully for him,” and he placed his hand over that of the death-stricken

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woman. No one seemed to remark that the rest of the promise was left unuttered. Madame de Brienne's breathing became more labored. She signed to the priest without speaking.

It was a weird, solemn ceremony. Madame made a snatch at the child's hand and gave it to Gervaise at the proper moment. It seemed as if she had been saving up her strength for this, disposing of the little child with no volition on her part, no understanding of what she was signing away, a girl's choice, a woman's freedom, the right to love when her time came.

The ceremony was over. The priest produced a piece of parchment, long and not all unrolled. "You will sign for her?" he said to Mademoiselle Saucier, pointing to the place.

"Let her make her mark herself. Let me. Barbette, guide my hand. Marguerite de Brienne. Can you read it plainly? Now, Angelique, Gervaise, and you, too, Barbe, with Jaques. Is it all done?"

"It is all done, Madame," and the priest bowed.

"Barbette, give Father Mambert the two gold pieces on that tray. Now go your way, Sir Priest," dismissing him peremptorily.

He glided out of the room and through the great hall full of shadows. Quite at the door another cowed priest rose.

"Well——" he exclaimed, half inquiringly.

"After the funeral Mademoiselle and her charge will go to the convent for safety. Once out of Paris, we will decide. Then the house may be ransacked—it will likely be pillaged before we reach the end. All papers and valuables—there was a wreath set with diamonds—will go to the convent, to the Holy Church whose property it was in the beginning. As for the heretical souls——"

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He made a very expressive gesture.

"If the Church itself is not swept away," said the other. "Every day the spirit of destruction and irreligion rises higher and higher. Next week we will get what we can out of Paris. The devil will hold high carnival before it is through."

"They cannot be so crazy! But the Church will withstand the whirlwind and the tempest. Still it behooves us to gather what we can out of the wreck."

As they went their way they laid sinister plans. The King was in prison yielding every day to some new demand of the rabble. Where it was to stop no human eye could foresee. Disbelief in all things was running rampant in Paris, but the unspoken terror had not yet invaded the environs, the ruin had not yet begun.

As the priest left the room Madame de Brienne attempted to speak, but the words only made a gurgle in her throat. Her eyes appeared to sink farther back, her thin nose sharpened; a curious shudder passed over her. The nurse poured the remaining medicine into a glass and added a little water. But the jaw seemed suddenly set. Only the convulsive movement betokened life.

Sylvie clung to Angelique in terror.

"Take them away," the nurse said to Barbette. Then in a lower tone—"She is dying, but it may be hours. Madame is strong."

They passed through the adjoining room into a sort of ell.

"I have something to tell you," Gervaise began. "There is a plan on foot——" he looked up at Jaques with mute inquiry.

"To take Mam'selle and Sylvie and all the valuables to the Convent of St. Eudor. Whether you will ever come out again——"

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"But we are not Catholics, we are Huguenots! And that marriage——" Angelique's face was full of scorn and disbelief.

"And the Church of Rome is to be overthrown as well as all other things," exclaimed Jaques. "Everything is to go. It is even said they will execute the King. And some go so far as to say there will be no Sunday, no—no anything, in the complete overturn. And we had better escape while we may. Mam'selle, you will have no taste for convent life?"

"There were martyrs in our family ere this," replied the girl, proudly. "I could die for my religion, but I could never be a Catholic."

"You see it is not safe to remain. True, we are not in the heart of Paris, but every place of note may be ransacked. And between the two fires——"

"But we are going to Canada——" interrupted Angelique, glancing from Gervaise to Jaques, her face growing pale with something she seemed to read on each countenance.

"We are not going to Canada. It was to Detroit whither Cousin Hugh went, and that was long ago. I could not make Madame understand and gave up the attempt. Whether he is dead or alive——"

"Oh, no, he cannot be dead!" Angelique uttered a heart-breaking cry.

"I mean to find him if he is in the New World," declared Gervaise. "We must all go thither. There is little to hold us here except this old house and memories of the past. The house may be wrested from us and destroyed. Jaques knows more of the danger than I, and he has planned. We are to go to Holland at once. Angelique, you and Barbe gather up the valuables that can be put in a small compass. We knew Madame must

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die—but I thought it would be before this wretched travesty. I am sure Hugh will consider it no marriage at all. And we have been arranging matters for the past week. I have all the papers of value, for sometime we may return, or at least Cousin Hugh may desire to. But I mean to take my chance in the New World. There are even fortunes to be made.”

Angelique’s eyes were alight with admiration at the vigor and purpose in the boyish face that seemed even as she looked at it to grow older and more manly. Next after Hugh he was heir to the De Brienne estates. Ah—if Hugh were gone! She clasped her hand suddenly to her heart.

“Hurry,” he exclaimed. “There is no time to be lost. Barbe has Madame’s diamonds quilted in her skirt. And the pearls and emeralds. And here—take these out of the wreath. For a century or more every bride of the house of Brienne has worn it.”

“Oh, can we not save it as it is?” pleaded Angelique. Would there never be another bride in the old house?

She had been taking off the veil and unfastening the loopings of the voluminous skirt that fell around the child like great piles of ivory snow, as it looks in the sunlight.

“No, I think not. Jaques, have you pincers or anything? You see it must be put in a box, and that would add to the bulk.”

The wreath was made largely of silver whitened to a wax-like appearance, passing every now and then through the hands of a jeweller to have its pristine glory restored. It was somewhat tarnished now. Angelique handed it reluctantly over to Jaques. She felt dazed with the suddenness of the tidings, with the strange events of the whole day, and this weird marriage.

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Barbette took Sylvie to her room to change her fantastic attire.

"I am married to Gervaise," she began, suddenly. "When you are married you have a husband."

"Yes—yes," absently.

"And where are we going? To the Palace?"

"Oh, no. I do not just know myself."

"Don't put on that ugly brown frock. Gervaise does not like it. He said so only this morning."

"Well, there is the blue one, if that is better."

"Yes, it is. It does not quite match my eyes. It is too dark. Angelique, why are you not married?"

"You are a vain little piece," evading the query.

Barbette stood in the doorway.

"Must we go, Barbe?" pleaded Angelique. For now the old château with its broad acres, its dense woods, its running streams, its songs of birds, its wealth of bloom, seemed a part of her very life, indeed all the life she had ever known.

"Pierre has just come. Things are worse in Paris. People are beginning to fly. It is very lucky that Gervaise listened so readily."

"But when was it all arranged? I don't understand. And why do we not go to England?"

"Jaques thinks Holland better. They have been planning the last fortnight, and I have been making ready. But we did not want the servants to know. We suspect there may be a tell-tale somewhere. And there was Madame—she is almost gone. Her body is cold except a little warmth about the heart. Poor Madame! Almost the last of her race, and such a fine woman in her day! But she will be buried in the old chapel vault with her kindred. All the plans have been given to Matthieu. When it is dusk we steal out; they will think we women

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are gone to bed. Gervaise and Jaques are supposed to take the carriage to go in to Paris. There will be one waiting at the entrance to the long wood. There can be no alarm given until morning."

"But it is so mysterious——"

"Yes. You will hear all about it on the journey. There will be plenty of time to talk. There is the summons to dinner. Let us go unconcerned, then I will tell you the rest. Father Mambert will be here in the morning."

Angelique shuddered. "He has a terrible face," she said, "so resolute, so merciless if need be."

"They think they are going to step in and rule. They will find themselves bitterly mistaken!"

They entered the large dining-room. It looked eerie enough in the dim light of the waxen candles, the furniture massive and black with age. In one end was set a small round table. The larger one was covered with a cloth thrown over the plate and china, and looked ghostly, like a pall, Angelique thought. Gervaise joined them. Barbe sat and waited on them. She was something more than Sylvie's nurse, a friend and companion.

"I have been dressing my doll for her marriage," Sylvie said to Gervaise. "But there is no one to marry her to. And can I have the priest? Though I don't like him."

"We will find some one to-morrow."

"You can't have two wives, can you?" raising her heavenly blue eyes to him.

"I believe not," smiling thoughtfully.

"Then *you* can't marry Marie Antoinette, because you have married me."

"No." He gave a short laugh in a meaningless fashion. Queens and kings had been married by proxy.

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"Who can you find? Oh, we might go over to Dessiers and get Philippe."

"Why, so we might, to-morrow. Yes, that is what we will do," nodding in a satisfied fashion.

The butler hovered about the table. Once Angelique made some comment, but Gervaise touched her foot and returned an irrelevant answer. No one seemed inclined to eat. And as they rose, a bell tolled suddenly. They all started.

A grave old servitor stood in the hall.

"I have to announce the death of our honored and esteemed mistress, Madame Rooul de Brienne, born Mademoiselle Marguerite Hortense de Chatilly. A fine and honorable woman, full of kindliness and many virtues. God rest her soul in Paradise!"

There seemed all at once a strange solemnity through the château. Servants huddled together and spoke in whispers. Barbette made a point of sending Angelique and Sylvie to their rooms, whither she soon followed them. Some hurried preparations were made.

"Where are we going?" asked the child.

"As far as Dessiers. The moon will be up presently, and we will have a nice ride. There, keep quiet. You will meet Gervaise." Cloaked and hooded, the two threaded their way through a side passage and a small paved courtyard. Gervaise stood waiting.

"Barbette will overtake us," Angelique said.

"Yes, that is all right."

The great hound rose and followed them. Gervaise had not the heart to send him back.

Barbette went to the room of Madame. She had been a kind mistress until the last two years of illness, but she really loved no human being except her son. For him she had schemed to possess the fortune of the Perriers,

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which was to be engulfed in the whirlwind of passion that swept over France, that she had scarcely heard of, and now would never know. The nurse and her maid were performing the last offices. It seemed a sad, heathenish death, but there was no Huguenot minister within reach, and a priest she would not have for herself.

The Church had its greedy eye on the child's fortune as well. Once immured inside of convent walls, there would be small redress in these troublous time. Indeed, who was there to question any proceeding?

"I am very weary," Barbette said. "To-morrow will be a busy day. So if I can do nothing to help, I think I will retire."

"We must send for the priest the first thing in the morning, Madame Barbette," said Susanne, the maid.

"Whatever young Master Gervaise thinks best we will do," she answered, gravely. "There can nothing be done to-night."

"I can willingly believe these heretics have no souls," said Susanne, disdainfully, when Barbette had left them. "They are hardened as rocks."

She went her way quietly after locking the door of her room. Then she soon caught up with the fugitives. Two carriages were waiting. The men took the lead, the women followed with a trusty young lad for driver. Sylvie soon grew sleepy and Barbe took her on her lap. Then she told Angelique of the plot Jaques had unearthed. The fathers of St. Eudor were to take charge of everything and have themselves appointed guardians of the young heiress, who would, in all probability, be brought up a Catholic and a nun.

"But—Cousin Hugh——" said Angelique.

"There are many ways of getting over difficulties when money lies at the end. What if Hugh never comes

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back? And no one knows the end of the trouble. It is said the King will be put to death, and the poor, unfortunate Queen! There is terror everywhere. People are flying in every direction from Paris. Arrests of innocent people happen, a dozen—nay, I think a hundred—times a day. If we can only reach Holland in safety! The New World cannot be any worse. There is liberty of religion, at all events. And now the colonies are at peace, and all is going smoothly.”

“But—we may return——” ventured the girl. To leave home and everything seemed heart-rending.

They were more fortunate than many, as they learned only a little later. In Amsterdam they heard the awful story of the inauguration of the Reign of Terror. Many well-known friends of the De Briennes perished. Property was confiscated, swept away, destroyed. Catholics and Protestants were alike despoiled.

And then they started on another journey to a new home in a new world. Gervaise Aubreton was full of the spirit of adventure, Barbette and Jaques restored the balance of gravity. Indeed, Barbette was like a mother to both girls; a superior woman in every respect, the foster sister of little Sylvie’s mother, and her companion of the two brief years of her happy married life. Her husband, an officer, had perished in battle, and she had died of grief. Barbette had promised never to leave the child, but the De Briennes were relatives and Madame had applied for the guardianship of the child conjointly with her son Hugh, who had then gone to Canada to dispose of some lands and to treat with some parties now in power since the unwilling cession, or rather conquest, of England.

Then Madame de Brienne had been seized with a mysterious and painful disease that baffled the medical

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skill of that day. Gervaise Aubreton had been summoned to the château, and, young as he was, made a sort of secretary. He was next in succession to Hugh, but much as Madame depended on him (for he was wise and trusty beyond his years), she still held a certain jealous feeling about him. Angelique Saucier was also a relative on another family line, a penniless orphan, and Madame had proved a kindly friend. Yet the last six months had tried the patience of every attendant and relative, and no one had dared forbid the fantastic marriage, followed so speedily by her death.

CHAPTER II.

CROSSING THE OCEAN.

It was a long journey, with many perils and adventures, that the little girl from old France took before she reached the strange New World, where she was to unfold and blossom, to grow from the bud of childhood to girlish sweetness and lovely womanhood.

They reached Amsterdam after a tedious journey, and found some friends among the sturdy Huguenot settlers. There were emigrants going to America all the time; there was the land of hard-won liberty, there were French and Spanish colonies, and there were new French settlements. There was boundless wealth to be had for work, for brains that could plan, and Gervaise Aubreton was fired with these glowing accounts.

Master Vollenkoven did much trading with Nieu Amsterdam, as he loved to call it. He had agents there who sent orders and disposed of whatever he shipped to them.

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And though no one had any very clear idea of the situation of Detroit except that it was on the great chain of lakes, Gervaise planned that he could leave the women in the port city, New York, and, with Jaques, go on a hunt for Hugh de Brienne.

For the news from Paris was terrible. Men, even, shuddered over it. Their escape had not been a day too soon.

Master Vollenkoven advised them to leave some of their money in a safe banking house. Never but once had he met with any untoward fate, but the ocean was infested with pirates, though it was true they were more to the south. And, in any event, it would be good to have something to fall back upon.

"And, Master Vollenkoven," said Barbe, "since you take such a friendly interest in us, which is most gracious and kindly, I will confess I have some of the De Brienne jewels. If Sir Hugh should never be found, the next heir is Master Gervaise, and the little lass who is related on the Chatilly side. I will give them into your keeping for a few years. One hardly knows whom to trust in a strange land."

"You will not find your confidence misplaced, Mistress Barbette. Almost I feel tempted to say to you, let the young fellow go over and see what awaits him, and you remain here for a while until things are better settled."

But the others would not consent to this scheme. Jaques had wished for some years to emigrate, and Angelique was quite ready to try her fortunes in the New World.

As for Sylvie, she was like a sunbeam, with the new freedom that came to her. She sang gay little French songs that she had learned from her neighbor, Philippe, as well as Angelique. Everything amused her. She was

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sweet and dainty and playful, and sat on the master's knee chattering so rapidly that he but half-understood. The good *vrou* envied her, for she had no children of her own.

"But I couldn't stay, Barbe, if Gervaise goes," she said with sweet gravity. "For I am his little wife, you know, and husbands and wives stay together always."

Barbette took her on her knee. Already the mystery had proved a little troublesome.

"Listen, my child," she began, gravely. "This is to be a secret for years to come. You are too young to understand all the reasons, but when you are larger and older, it will all be explained to you. See how well you can keep it in your little heart like a sweet, modest girl, until Gervaise is ready. Men do not like to be teased about such things. He might tire of you by and by. See what a pretty little lady you can be about the matter. It is like this—" (she opened the jewel casket)—"all these precious things are hidden within. It is not the right time to wear them. Some day you may put them on, and then you will be a wife in truth. Now we shut them up again just as you shut up your secret."

The large blue eyes studied Barbe with a sort of slow wonder. Then she placed her hand on her heart with a long, tender sigh, and said in a sweet, wistful tone:

"How old must I be, Barbe?"

"About twelve, I think."

"That is six years. Barbe," with a shy, pleading look, "may I talk to *you* sometimes? Angelique will not listen."

"Yes, but to no one else. It is our secret."

The child smiled and kissed her. Then she sighed again with an unchildlike tenderness and resignation.

"It will be six years—a little longer than I have lived already. And it seems a great while since I hunted the

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woods of Brienne for flowers and nodded to the hares running about. And Philippe and Dessiers! Oh, it is long, long ago," with a pathetic quiver of the small red mouth.

Barbe kissed and comforted her.

The good Rudersdorp was freighted presently. Beside the French refugees, there were only three passengers: a portly Dutchman and his good *vrou*, going to rejoin their son who had made a home in the New World, and an Englishman, appointed to settle some business and enforce some claims, and who railed continually at the colonies, and had much hard talk about the French. Indeed, there were times when Gervaise flared up and it took all the stolid good-nature of Captain Bolmer to preserve peace.

There had been rather a sad parting with the Vollenkovens, for they had become much attached to the emigrants, but they gave many good wishes for a successful quest, and proffered a home and a welcome, if they tired of the New World. For although there had been much going back and forth for the last hundred years, people were still strangely ignorant, and seemed to have a vague idea that if one really settled in America, there was some fear of their becoming Indianized and taking up a wild life.

At first, the weather was fair and the journey pleasant, although Angelique was haunted by strange, awesome fears when they were on the wide ocean. The ship seemed so small, so frail in that boundless waste. Any little mishap, and they would go fathoms deep to an unknown grave.

What wonderful days and nights those were! The wind sang in the sails and drove them along, sometimes on a blue sea, sometimes turning a translucent green,

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glowing morning and evening in such colors as they had never seen in France. Burning bars of saffron and blood-red, a dome of gold growing richer, denser, with a commingling of such colors that one could only watch in amaze; streaming banners of rose and green, and all glowing iridescence, until the whole broadening heavens defined the sea-line out of which the sun came up in majesty and splendor.

And when he went down in the sea again, all the colors were softened. Masses of shadow began to be differentiated among the slowly fading colors, as if vaguely asserting some other world; infinite lengths of distance, islands, and vistas with haunting suggestions, dying away in the twilight, until all was a soft gray, and the sea-line had faded. Then they seemed to creep onward like some great ghost. Were they really alive? Angelique asked herself. The influence was so weird and dreamy.

Then there were curious blows when all the ocean seemed in a turmoil, and each wave tossed up a great froth like a fleece of wool that the wind tore in tatters and sent off in fragments. Angelique was frightened at first; then she began to enjoy these freaks of wildness. Two soft rainy days, with very little wind, when they seemed sailing in a mist, heaving and tossing in a great gray expanse as if heaven had dropped an impenetrable shroud over their heads, and they huddled together awe-stricken.

But, in the main, it was a pleasant journey for the first fortnight. They had time to talk over the old days, Angelique and Gervaise read their Latin and French poets, and sang songs, to the great delight of the crew. They listened to Captain Bolmer's wonderful stories of the New World, the two cities he knew most about, New York and Boston. Once he had sailed to the Floridas,

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and some strange verdurous islands just below the Gulf of Mexico. And there was all the southern world Cortez and Pizarro had taken possession of, and found in them rich treasures for Spain.

Out of this idyllic life, just as it seemed as if they were to go on forever, came the storm. Clouds began to fly low like great birds. Tempestuous waves beat up to the gray vault of heaven, and tore in shreds the clouds that ventured too near. An awful, inarticulate war seemed following them like some dreadful wild beast, ready to crunch them up. The crested waves rose mountains high and lashed themselves in wild fury. And though the rain was not terrific at any time, and the good captain comforted them by stories of so much wilder gales, the women shrank in wordless terror.

The wind lasted longer than the rain. Indeed, though the sun did not really shine on the third day, there were patches of blue sky visible, and they were allowed on deck though the vessel still pitched and groaned.

"We are far out of our course," said the captain, "but we cannot right ourselves in a blow like this. Tomorrow will be fair. It will only make us two or three days later."

"What a wonderful thing a ship is!" exclaimed Angelique in admiration. "It seemed as if we must be engulfed every moment. Was there no danger? Yet it was as terrible to live through as if we were all going to destruction the next instant."

"It is good for you to see a storm like this," and there was a twinkle in his eye that was nearly always screwed half shut. "Oh, it was not bad, not half bad! I have weathered many a worse one. So has the good Rudersdorp. For five years I have sailed her. And though we

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have gone out of our course, it is better to give in to a devil of a wind than to run into her teeth. They can bite sharp."

"Why do you call it 'she'? Didn't the Greeks call it Boreas and Neptune?"

Captain Bolmer laughed. "I know not much about the old Greeks," he said. "Such a wind makes me think of an angry, scolding woman. You cannot make headway against her. You keep to leeward."

Toward night the wind fell and bid fair to change before morning. But it had consequences no wisdom could have foreseen.

They descried another vessel the next morning, hastening in their direction, it appeared. At first she carried a French flag. That was hauled down and the English raised in its stead.

"I do not like her looks," declared the mate, with an ominous shake of his head.

Captain Bolmer studied her through the glass. There was no friendly port to run into. The man's bronzed and weather-beaten face paled. What could he do against such an enemy? They might fight to the death against overwhelming odds and sell their lives dearly, but the two women and the child—what would be their fate?

The vessel was well manned and came on with a fell purpose. Now they saw what she was, a pirate ship, and they were doomed.

"We shall sell our lives dearly, men," cried the mate. "To the guns!"

"Nay, it has been said all that a man hath will he give for his life, and perhaps the life of others. Do you not see that we should be overpowered at once!"

"And are we to stand here and be murdered in cold blood!" cried the angry sailor.

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A quick shot rattled over the distance, followed by a fierce command.

"As well, perhaps, as in in hot blood," returned the prudent captain. "Listen, men: We have no chance against them. Look at their bristling guns! It will be wise to make the best bargain we can. I know it does not look heroic, but one can throw away one's life any day. There are the women to think of. And when we are all murdered, the pirates will have their own way. We shall have done them little harm."

"We may cost the devils some lives——"

"As if that brood was not always on the increase! What would a few men be to them!"

Gervaise had taken it in. They had whiled away some of the magnificent moonlight evenings with stories of the daring and cruel captures of merchantmen by pirates who infested the southern seas, and had many a well-nigh impenetrable hiding-place in the islands and hidden coves about.

For now there was a clang of steel, and shouts, and a fierce hubbub. The guns were trained on the Rudersdorp. For an instant the men had mutinied, and then the certain capture had sobered them, as the swift vessel, bristling with men and culverins, neared them.

"To the women! You and Jaques. Keep them in the cabin," cried the captain, with a paling face.

Gervaise went at once. Angelique, terrified, was wildly crying out.

"Yes, it is a pirate ship. It swarms with men and arms. The sailors want to fight. Captain Bolmer is intrenched in solid Dutch phlegm. They will take us all, but fighting would only be the satisfaction of courage——"

"Will they murder us?" demanded Barbe.

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"Heaven only knows!" Gervaise pulled the stout bolt on the door. Angelique threw herself in a little heap and buried her face in Barbette's lap. Sylvie stood wide-eyed and terrified.

They listened to the trampling, the oaths, the shouting and confusion of tongues, the report of a pistol or two, and huddled together in a terrified group. The pirate captain made short work of his parley, but it seemed hours to them in the awful uncertainty.

There was a voice at the cabin door. It was Jaques, and yet they shrank in alarm.

"Let me in," he exclaimed, and Gervaise drew the bolt. "It is settled, whether for good or ill," and his voice was tremulous with excitement. "It was hard to restrain the men. Our good captain was not wanting in courage, but, faith! there is sometimes greater bravery in wisdom and common sense. We could do nothing but throw away our lives. We may have them taken by this devil's crew, after all. They fairly swarm, like ants in a hill. Some of them have come from the Barbary coast, and are savage to look upon. Heaven help us all!"

"Do you suppose we shall be murdered? That were not the worst." Barbette glanced fearfully at the head in her lap, and now Sylvie was clinging to her shoulder.

"The captain hath made a proffer. We are to be set ashore somewhere. That is as far as I have heard. They want the vessel. Perhaps that and the goods will satisfy them. There are some settlements about, some quite towns. We drifted so far out of our course."

Then they waited again. From the noise and confusion one might fancy a battle was going on. Voices were raised in trumpet tones, oaths were bandied about, there was a rattle and clang of arms, the trampling of a multitude.

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The captain came down after a long while, it appeared to the little group, waiting in frightful anxiety and dreading their fate.

"Your Greek, Master Neptune, hath played us a scurvy trick this time," to Gervaise, with a smile sadder than any sorrow. "But we were delivered into the enemies' hands, and prisoners must make what terms they can. The rascally crew are three to our one, they and their vessel armed to the teeth. Good Master Vollenkoven will be sorry enough, though many of my good guelders go with the venture. But I know him well, and he knows and trusts me, and would rather I should save the womenkind. For, if we had been overpowered, there is no telling what these devils would have done. And so——"

There were tears in the honest blue eyes, and the voice broke with a sort of terror.

"They are in the hold going over the cargo; Master Vollenkoven's choice wines and Flemish cloths, and laces and silks that were meant for the gay damsels of New Amsterdam. And now let me tell over my plan. The Ten Broecks must share the loss of some, perhaps all, their worldly wealth; the Englishman has not much to lose. I said there was a woman and two children—it is this one who is in danger," and he tapped the shoulder of the fair girl. "They will not care to be burdened with children. Mam'selle Angelique must be a sick child, I said she was ill with some strange disease. Her face must be made ghastly pale. Tie up her head with a coif, and keep her in her berth. They will no doubt search the cabin."

"How wise in Master Vollenkoven to insist I should leave a portion of my money and some jewels with him," declared Barbe. And she gave thanks that she had been

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shrewd enough to hide others where they would be little suspected.

"Get the child to bed as soon as possible. Cry and be fretful, as if in pain. I have some cases of beautifying powder in my cabin——"

"I have some here," interrupted Barbette.

"Quick then. Is there not some black stuff with which gay demoiselles darken their brows? Or the wick of a burnt candle will do. Make a shade under her eyes. And now the paleness. It will wash off and thou wilt be pretty again for someone's eyes, little maid. Get thee to bed and groan most disconsolately, if visitors come."

They all assisted in the transformation, and Angelique tumbled into her small berth again. Then the captain left them, bidding them cheer each other, and hope for a speedy release.

Meanwhile the pirate crew were ransacking bales and cases, and planning and congratulating themselves in so fierce a manner that it seemed as if they would come to blows. Then the leader gave orders that the ships should be lashed together and sail on. The whiskey and brandy flowed freely, and presently there was a half-rebellion among the men, when the captain administered a severe lashing to some of the desperadoes and had them put in irons.

It was late in the afternoon when they demanded admittance to the cabin. Jaques opened the door. The captain was a powerfully built man, with a great shock of black hair and piercing eyes, a huge beard that had reddish tints in it, and a dress that was a queer conglomeration of styles, most of the garments very rich of their kind, but soiled, and showing traces of hard usage. Two men stood behind, peering curiously about.

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Barbette was holding Sylvie in her arms. Gervaise sat on a box. He had on a blouse of Jaques and a pair of his clumsy shoes.

Barbette glanced up, really terrified at the fierce face and figure before her.

"The sick child?" he inquired, in excellent French.

Barbette shook her head and indicated the berth from whence came a groan and a restless movement. He stalked over, but Angelique appeared unconscious of his scrutiny.

For a moment the man seemed nonplussed.

"Your children?" he asked abruptly.

"Nay, Monsieur. Their parents are dead; their fortune was swallowed up by the Commune. We fled. We are poor emigrants. I am the nurse."

"Ha!" exclaimed one of the men, with a sudden thrust forward. "Treasure!" He pointed to the brass clamped chest.

"Take the keys and search, M'sieu," and Barbe held them out to him.

The captain struck the hand down with a blow that made the other wince. Perhaps it was the amount of treasure they had found with such small opposition that rendered him more kindly inclined. There seemed nothing to whet his cupidity, no protest to arouse suspicion, such as the Dutch couple had made. These people were evidently what the captain had represented them to be, not worth meddling with.

You will disembark in the morning," he said. "No one shall molest you. If you were a pretty young woman we might ask you to bear us company," and he chuckled hoarsely.

Then they disappeared and the cabin was molested no further. All the long afternoon they remained within

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and heard the laughter and carousing. Then the night dropped down with its short twilight, and the two ships kept on their way.

Captain Bolmer came to the cabin with the mate and one of the crew.

"If there is any foul play, we will be on guard," he announced, briefly.

But there were no alarms. The rough merriment and drunken revelry was hushed. They slept a little. After midnight a gibbous moon shed a faint light over the waters, and the myriad stars twinkled and shone in the blue arch overhead.

There was a stir suddenly, a shout of command, a rumbling sound.

"Come, you rascally fellows! Row whatever you will take to the shore. We have enough rubbish. We can afford to be liberal," with a coarse laugh.

They freighted the boat with bales and boxes, and the sailors rowed it ashore, coming back for another load. Barbe's chest and the other boxes passed unmolested.

"And now the women and the brats!"

Jaques lifted Angelique in his arms, rolled in a blanket, understanding well what would have been her fate if her real identity had been known. Gervaise took Sylvie, half-asleep, who snuggled closely down on his shoulder. Barbette came last.

"Thank your saints, whoever they may be, that you are let off so easy. *Bon voyage* to you. Wish us good luck!" and the captain ended with a tremendous oath.

"If I wished at all it would be to see you all swinging in chains at the yard-arm," cried one of the crew, as the two vessels stood out and turned slowly. "Surely the devil ought to get his own!"

"He is in no hurry for those he is sure of," commented Jaques.

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"Well, we have escaped with whole skins so far. It is the first time I have fallen in with pirates, and a villanous lot they were! Now that I look back, I wonder they did not murder us all in cold blood!"

"As they would have been only too glad to, if you had been allowed your way, Martin Grill. Well, they have given us some food, and a desert island, perhaps. It is still too dark to explore. And I had nothing but a month's wage coming to me that the bloody pirates could not take away, blast them!"

Various comments were uttered. The Englishman now thought of half a dozen things they might have done. The Dutch couple sat upon the sand and bewailed their misfortunes.

Angelique tore off her wrappings. The fragrant air was delightful after the close cabin. The dawn was stirring in the east, the gorgeous tints struggling through the gray. There was a little chilliness in the air and they huddled closely together, though the sailors dropped down on the sand and were soon finishing the nap from which they had been aroused.

Then the sun rode up royally out of the ocean; that was all they could see from the eastward. Angelique stirred, lifted her head from Barbe's arm that had been her pillow, and stared about. Endless reaches of sand strewn with bits of shells, and here and there a mass of stone jutting out, fretting the slow tide. Further up, a line of stunted trees stood, green and vivid against the opalescent sky. The strange, yet dreary, magnificence sent a shiver over her.

Jaques roused as well, and then the captain suddenly sat up.

"I wonder if we have been left to perish on some wretched island!" he exclaimed. "Or it may be a part

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of mainland. My friend, let us stretch our legs and take a tour of observation."

Jaques joined him and they proceeded toward the strip of woods. The ground rose perceptibly, and now there began to be hummocks of verdure and the white sand broken with streaks of earth that had doubtless washed down. To the west were clusters of islands, some shining in translucent green. Hither and thither sea birds darted, a fish-hawk pounced down upon his prey, but the loneliness of sea and sky was intense, and it was a long distance to the woods. Still some discovery must be made, even if it was to face starvation on a desolate island.

They had slanted in a westerly direction, and when they neared the end of the belt they saw quite an island indeed, cut off from a larger mainland by a wide channel.

"If I had a glass," said the captain. "That looks like a settled country over yonder! And—yes, there are vessels moving, I am sure. We may put up a flag of distress and attract some one."

"The women may have something handy. This side of the island is more promising, at all events. And see—someone has been here, for there are signs of a fire."

It was true. In a natural depression in a rock there was a sort of fireplace, sheltered alike from wind and most rains. And now they could see a long point of the island jutting out, forming a sort of bay that might be a safe anchorage. They also discovered several battered tin utensils. Some one had been in the same plight as themselves, or, indeed, it might be a rendezvous for piratical expeditions.

When they returned, their little crew was busy with dozens of plans for escape. Barbette had spread a cloth on the sand and set out some of the provisions. Gervaise

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was full of adventure, Angelique serious, and Sylvie running gayly about, gathering her skirt full of shells.

When they had finished their meal they decided to follow the captain's advice, and remove to the more promising side of the island.

"In case of storm we should find a shelter," he said, "and there certainly are some signs of life on the opposite shore. With a glass we could see plainly."

"I have a small one in the box," cried Gervaise. "Yes, let us go somewhere. Sitting here watching this great ocean would drive one crazy!"

The sun that had risen so magnificently had retired behind pale rose-gray levels, tinged with lavender, drooping down and growing duller. But it made a pleasant under-roof, and all the reaches of sand seemed set with grains of silver, rather than the gold of half an hour ago.

They soon started on their march, two of the sailors carrying the chest, and others shouldering various boxes and bundles. The air blew up fresh; the specks of islands about made picturesque breaks in the wide expanse of waters. More than once they put down their burdens. The way seemed much longer than they thought, and there was some grumbling. But at length the woody fragrance was perceptible; the greenery diffused a certain sense of being once more reunited to the living earth. And now the sun was struggling through the clouds. It was well they had found such a promising place of refuge.

Sylvie had danced along in eager, childish fashion, and sung snatches of songs. Angelique, graver and older, lived over the peril, and wondered with Gervaise how the pirates had allowed them to escape with so little personal molestation. The truth was that they were most

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anxious to get to their own destination and have the Rudersdorp put in trim to prey upon other merchantmen. They had learned by experience that honest, well-trained sailors were not to be trusted; that they were only too ready to listen to mutinous projects, and that their secrets were hardly safe if one of them escaped. There were enough bold, adventurous men to be picked up almost anywhere.

The first thing was to hang out a flag of distress. Barbe supplied the cloth. They tore it in two long strips to float out pennantwise, and one of the sailors cut a young sapling to which it was firmly attached, and then, climbing one of the trees, fastened it securely, making it much higher than the adjacent branches. When the wind blew it out straight it was quite a sightly object.

They strained their eyes even with the glass, but, besides the islands in the distance, could only see vaguely what they believed was the shore-line of some of the Colonial States. Between was a wide space of comparatively tranquil water. All the afternoon passed, and now there would be hunger and thirst to face. Food might be obtained, for there seemed fish in plenty, but no springs or rills in the sandy soil.

The half threatening clouds of the day broke into a wild, sweeping, tropical shower that hurried out to the ocean and was quenched in a brilliant sunset. But it had filled the hollows in the rocks and they drank their fill with delight, and made their bed under the trees, sleeping for very weariness.

The captain and two of the sailors were up at early dawn, but the magnificence of the morning hardly touched them. Was that really a sail in the distance? So long it seemed stationary that it must be some mirage; and they retraced their weary footsteps, not daring to announce their vague hope.

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After breakfast Gervaise began to stroll up toward the northern end of the island, taking both girls with him. The captain came out again with the glass.

"Look up!" cried Gervaise, eagerly. "There, to the northeast. I thought at first it must be a flock of gulls. Is it—anything?" and he caught his breath, his face pale and then red, his eyes strained.

"It is a vessel of some kind. She is headed this way. Yes, she is coming through the strait or channel, whatever it is. I saw it nearly two hours ago, but I dared not hope. If she will only see our signal! So do not run back, nor say a word. It may be some mistake."

Gervaise paused. His first impulse was to fly to the little group and announce the news. He held out his hand for the glass.

"I doubt if your eyes are better than mine, young sir," and there was a kind of desperate hopefulness in his tone.

"But she is coming this way!" The lad's voice broke with emotion. "Oh, yes, I can see plainly. And the wind is fair for her. Oh, if our signal was only up this end——"

"Run and ask some of the sailors to bring it. We must not miss any chance."

It was not only the signal and the needed help, but the whole company followed. And now that the light atmosphere hovering about cleared away, she could be seen with the unaided eye. How they watched! What breathless, wordless prayers went up to the blue vault above them! It seemed hours, so slowly did the minutes pass. The pennant flew out bravely. The vessel came straight on. At last there was the thrice-welcome sound of the trumpet. Madame Ten Broeck threw herself on the ground and cried hysterically; Angelique hid her face on

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Barbe's shoulder. There was a strange silence through the little group for many moments, a sense of relief that had no words, needed none. They were surely rescued!

The *Mary Ann*, stout and seaworthy, with a miscellaneous cargo, was bound for New Orleans. Captain Strong listened to the story of the wayfarers, and took them on board, every heart full of thanksgiving, for they knew now it might have been many days before another vessel would come that way.

CHAPTER III.

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ACROSS the blue waters of the Gulf the rescued travellers sped. Lakes and bays, and points and islands, and the low-lying banks of the yellow Mississippi with craft of all kinds, at that day flat-bottomed boats and sailing vessels, and a strange sound of many languages, a jumble of nationalities as if all the world had poured their overflow into this one spot. Africans of various hues, swarthy Portuguese, Spanish, French, Indians, and Americans—a bewildering sight to the French emigrants, who shrank together with a lost, homeless feeling.

The straggling rows of long black rafts, with short paddles at the sides that projected like fins, and one long oar at the stern, piled high with fruit, vegetables, poultry, and pork; other and more pretentious craft with barrels of flour, cotton, which even then was a source of profit, though still in its infancy, and other bales of merchandise—a feature of the fast growing development and commercial enterprise that was to make a famous

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city later on, but seemed now one vast jumble, after orderly Amsterdam.

The Mary Ann was safely moored. There were some troublesome preliminaries to be gone through with. And now the sun was slanting low in the western heavens, losing itself behind the great mountains still to be explored, and the river began to gleam like a sinuous golden band between the verdurous shores. Then a cold wind blew up from the Gulf, and the convent bells began to chime. How soft and sweet it sounded!—the call to vespers. Suddenly an army of flags were run up to the masthead, colors of many nations.

“Oh, how beautiful it all is! And look at the bowed heads! It makes one almost envy the Catholics,” exclaimed Angelique, deeply touched.

It did seem wonderful that among that bedlam of din there should be an instant halt and reverence. Men and women crossed themselves, responded softly; then the labor of life went on like a great ocean wave rolling back.

“It is a marvellous sight,” replied Gervaise, as his eyes wandered slowly about. “One can hardly believe it real.”

Sylvie had tight hold of Angelique’s hand.

“Oh, look at the little black children,” she cried, breathlessly. “Are they the Indians? And what makes their hair grow in little tails? And see those dancing! O that cruel man, to strike them with his lash!”

A man with a broad-brimmed hat and a long horse-whip in his hand had scattered a group of merry youngsters that made the air resound with their howls and cries. He was clearing a way in the muddy street for his wagon.

Captain Strong came up to them.

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"You will not care to stay all night on the boat in the noise and the smell of everything. Your boxes will be safe in the cabin. You may lock it in and take the key. Neither will you like the lodging house; that is well enough for the men. I will send someone with you where you will be comfortable for the night. It is a Madame Milhet in Dauphine Street, something of a walk, but a nice, quiet place."

"We shall not stay here, Monsieur Strong. We shall push on—to some place," and Barbe knitted her brows a little. "Yes, we shall be glad of a refuge to-night. And you have been so good, Monsieur."

"Who wouldn't be good, as you call it, to such unfortunate castaways! But then—I have heard worse pirate stories than yours. And I don't see how your young girl escaped their clutches, even by playing off ill," and a quizzical sort of smile crossed his weather-beaten face. "Yes, you have much to be thankful for."

"We are, M'sieur," and she bowed her head.

"Mère Milhet will be very good to you. She is French, not Spanish nor mixed," and he laughed a little, thinking how proud and tenacious these French people were! Already American blood began to show the peculiar cosmopolitanism that was to make them at ease with all nations, while not less proud of their birthright.

One of the sailors was deputed to accompany them. They left the boat, walking over the long gang-plank that was like a raft, and picking a way through bales and boxes and barrels, and a swarming crowd that set Bar-bette almost wild with terror. She had Angelique by the arm, while Jaques picked up Sylvie, who clasped her arms tightly about his neck. The streets were narrow and muddy, and gutters were full of ill-smelling, stagnant water. There were scarcely no sidewalks. Booths and

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stores were closing for the night. There were rows of low houses, blackened by exposure to the weather and the indifference of their owners. It was growing rapidly dark, but here and there a light flared in a window, and there were sounds of mirth and revelry and wild French songs. Negresses thrust flowers in their faces, or from some corner cried hot eatables from which came a savory smell.

Presently the crowd grew less, the houses wore a different aspect. In some, where the heavy wooden shutters stood ajar, there were signs of home life and gay voices chattering. Then they turned into Dauphine Street, and here another change met them. The houses were detached; there were gardens and trees between, the air was fragrant with the sweetness that nightfall wooed from leaf and blossom. Most of the houses had an upper story with an overhanging balcony, vine-wreathed, and reviving one with its delicious odor.

The man paused before a heavy batten door, with a fanlight above, guarded by iron bars. On one side was a heavy iron knocker, and this made the street resound with the force of his summons.

A head looked out from above. "Who is there, and what is it you want?" asked a woman's voice, in rather broken English.

"It is Jack Dubois. I come from Captain Strong, who is just in. He begs you to take some French refugees for the night. They were caught by pirates and barely escaped by the skin of their teeth. He will answer for them."

"I will come down."

"The heavy bolt was pulled. The door was opened cautiously, as if still half in fear.

"Oh, it is all right, Mère Milhet. The captain picked

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them up on an island where they had been set ashore. And he says you are not to be afraid. He had them two days."

The door opened wider. There was a sort of square vestibule, shut off by another strong door. Mère Milhet had hung her candle in the sconce at the side, but it hardly lighted the dark walls, that were of cypress wood, grown deeper by age.

"There are many of you," she said, with a little hesitation. "But Captain Strong is my very good friend. Yes, come in, Madame, M'sieu—ah, the petite darling——" and she looked from one to the other of the women as if to trace relationship, as Gervaise stood Sylvie down on the stone floor.

Barbette explained at a little length in French, interrupted now and then by Mère Milhet's ejaculations.

"Well, now that I have done my duty, I will report to the captain," said their guide. "Some one will come for them in the morning——"

"Why not find my own way down?" exclaimed Gervaise in eager tones. "Yes, Jaques and I will see to the luggage—what is left of it," with a touch of irony in his tone.

"Well, well, as you like." The man touched his cap with his adieu.

Mère Milhet led the way to the inner room, that was quite well furnished and spacious. A long wooden settee had a mattress covered with gay chintz and some cushions at either end.

"Ah, what you must have endured!" she began. "The Gulf is infested with pirates who rendezvous in the islands about. And there are the privateers, little better, perhaps. Why must they prey on each other like wild beasts? There would be work enough; there is land to

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settle, but they take the goods of others continually. And there are horrible stories told—but you must be tired and need refreshment. Lucie, Dolomine, get ready the table! Will you follow me upstairs?”—to her guests.

There were two side ells to the house, which left a sort of courtyard at the back, before the real garden began. Flowers and vines grew about everywhere, adding a hundred fragrances to the soft, clear air, so different from the sickening smells of the levee. In one ell was a large, long room with three single pallets in a row, each one covered with a snowy white quilt. The floor was bare, but scrubbed until it almost shone. Two or three queer old pieces of furniture, half desks and chests of drawers, an iron-bound, massive chest, several antique chairs, and a shelf on which stood a pair of odd pitchers and some silver candlesticks. On either side of the dressing-table hung an iron sconce. Madame lighted the candles.

“I can hardly tell—you are not the mother of both?” glancing inquiringly at Barbette.

“I must be mother to both now. This young girl, Angelique Saucier, has been orphaned from early years. Her relative, the Marquise de Brienne, took her. The little one was also related to Madame, on her mother’s side, and I was foster sister to her mother—the lovely young girl whose husband was killed in the war with Spain, and she soon followed him with a broken heart. The Marquise sent for Sylvie and myself, and we all lived in the old château. The Sieur Hugh came to Canada three years ago, and we have not heard from him of late. The Marquise fell ill with a lingering complaint. Nearly a year ago she died. And there was trouble in France——”

“Horrible trouble! The Spanish are our masters,

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Madame, but we do not forget we are French. The poor King and Queen! And now, Madame, no one is safe. It is frightful! People being rushed to the guillotine every day, innocent of any crime. What are these fiends? Surely they cannot be French. It must be some wild rabble that has descended upon them as did the Huns. There are emigrants coming all the time, glad to escape. They will build a new France. Even here—then, Madame, is it your pleasure to remain with your charges?” suddenly bringing herself back to her duties as hostess. “There is water and towels for refreshment. And now I will provide for the gentlemen.”

They were placed in the other wing, and were most grateful for so delightful a refuge.

Sylvie ran to the window and peered out in the darkness.

“It is like Brienne!” she cried, delightedly. “It is so sweet, and hark——” putting her dainty head on one side, “Music!”

There was the tinkle of a guitar and a curious accompaniment of a banjo that deepened the melody in several places. Then a soft, clear voice broke into song.

“Oh, it is delightful! Barbe, I want to stay here always. I hate the ocean and the ships. I will never go in one again with the nasty, watery smell. And here it is so sweet! See, there are stars coming out. There is a great golden one hanging down low. And the beautiful singing! Angel, why do you not sing any more?”

Angelique gave a short, unmirthful laugh.

“One must be gay to sing, and we have been so full of care——”

“But you did sing for Captain Bolmer.”

“And the pirates never asked me for a song.”

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"You were ill in the berth. That is why I will not go sailing any more. Are there pirates all over?"

"Oh, I hope not, my little dear."

"Are we very far from France?"

"Thousands of miles."

"And shall I never see Philippe again?" mournfully.

"And my beautiful doll! You know I was going to ask Philippe to marry her."

A tall negress in a gay turban announced that supper was in readiness.

They had bathed hands and faces and felt a little restored, but to Barbe it seemed as if she had never been clean since leaving Amsterdam.

But the snowy cloth, the fragrant tea, the great piles of tropical fruit, and the generous elbow-room were enchanting. Mina—this tall negress who carried herself like a queen was called Dolomine—waited upon them in a royal fashion. The lines of caste had been so broken in upon that they all sat down together. Barbette Champe was grave and well-bred enough for any lady, and though Jaques had hesitated at first upon putting himself on an equality with his young master, who might one day be lord of Brienne, dangers had brought them into close relationship as friends.

Madame Milhet answered many of Gervaise's questions about New Orleans. It was plain to be seen that she did not love the Spanish domination.

"Ah, M'sieu, we were basely sold to Spain by our own King," the hostess said, with a long sigh. "People did explain that by force of war and treaty the King was compelled to give us up. At first we did not believe it. We were French to our heart's core, although there were many Spanish even then. So a great meeting was called at Place d'Armes. Planters and merchants and gentle-

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men, and even the small farmers, arranged to appeal to the King. For it was rumored that with the coming of Spanish rule there would be a looking forward to the establishment of an inquisitor general here. My husband's cousin, who was a rich merchant, was sent to Paris to plead for a restoration of the old relations. Then we waited and waited. Jean Milhet never saw the King—there was so much chicanery. Then came Don Antonio de Ulloa, the new Spanish Governor, and up went Spanish flags. The commerce with France and the West Indies was suppressed. There was talk of ruin everywhere. The French resolved to rise. Perhaps it was not wisely done, but some of us had a hope of founding a new French kingdom, or colony of some kind, that should be independent. What right had the King to trade us off?"

Mère Milhet was past sixty now. With years she had grown to ample proportions. Her eyes were black and sparkling when she was excited, but, with the general softening effect of time, they too had softened in repose. Her dark olive skin was clear, her features quite regular, though the nose had broadened out a little. Her cheeks still had a girlish pink, unless the infrequent indulgence in temper flamed them to a vivid red.

"Was it the King—really? That was Louis XV." *

"Yes. They barricaded the Governor's house. They ran up the French flag, they filled the air with shouts for the King, and enjoined the Governor to leave the colony at once. Then they sent messengers to the courts of France and Spain. The plan for a republic was formed. If we had possessed wise and far-sighted men like the American colonies when they made their brave struggle,—but, perhaps it was too soon. It was in July '69 that the Spaniards reached our great river in overwhelming

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force. Everybody was filled with dismay. Don Alexandro O'Reilly, with twenty-six hundred troops, landed and took formal possession in the name of the King of Spain."

"But I would have fought to the death!" cried the boy, interested beyond measure. "Did they not even strike one blow?"

"My husband thought it was because they had no responsible head that they had temporized too long. Clearly resistance would have been useless. The brave Lafrénière made a manly address and proffered the homage of the people. But it was of no avail. He and many of the other leaders were arrested and sentenced to be hanged, but even the Spanish officials joined the colonists in beseeching that they might at least have a more honorable death. Lafrénière, Doyan, Caresse, Joseph Milhet, and Marquis were shot; most of the others were sent to Morro Castle, Havana, and when they were released they were expatriated from Louisiana. The old Council was swept away; the Cabilda took its place. Then there were new offices made, and there was great pomp and ceremony attending them. But O'Reilly did not remain long. And then it was Uuzaga, and the new Spanish priests who tried to banish our good Father Dagobert. And the nuns' schools were to teach Spanish, but they could not take from us our beloved French tongue with all their efforts. And, after all, O'Reilly was but a mongrel—not even a true Spaniard. But it is said, after his cruelty, he was excessively polite and urbane, and very fond of high society."

"Then you are not really French at all?"

"Except in heart and soul, M'sieu. And some of us cherish a hope—but strange things happen in the world now."

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"And France has no king. Oh, what will become of her!"

"I have faith in France," Mère Milhet said, proudly.

Sylvie came around and leaned her golden head on Barbe's shoulder, her eyes almost closed.

"I am so sleepy," she murmured.

"The poor child! And you are all tired! I have talked twice too long."

"And I have not heard half enough. I am interested in your strange New Orleans," declared Gervaise.

Barbe took her charge upstairs and undressed her, and the little girl slept soundly among the fragrant roses.

CHAPTER IV.

SYLVIE AND LAURE.

"OH, where are we?" cried Sylvie, springing from her narrow bed. "Barbe—Angel!—did we leave the boat last night and have such a delicious supper, and was there some one who talked—and a tall black woman—or was I dreaming? I was so tired and sleepy. Oh yes, here is the window and the vines—and here is a wonderful bird, and look at the trees, and the roses and flowers that I do not know about. Is it really New Orleans? And where is the rest of America?"

Angelique laughed at the child's eagerness. She, too, felt refreshed.

There was a tap at the door. Sylvie ran.

"Oh, here is a great bucket of water," she exclaimed. "Did it drop down from the clouds, think?"

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"Doesn't water generally drop down from the clouds?" queried Angelique.

"But not by the bucketful."

"Well, I am not so sure about that; I have seen it come down in torrents," said Barbe.

"But there wasn't any bucket unless you set one out to catch the water," returned the child, archly.

"Come and let me make your toilette. It is so long since we have lived in any Christian fashion."

"It seems years and years since we left Brienne," and Angelique gave a little sigh, not that she wished herself back. And yet those last days were so strange that she continually asked herself if the events had really taken place? Was Hugh de Brienne truly and lawfully married?

Sylvie looked fresh as a rose. She ran downstairs without waiting to ask whether it was right or not. In fact, she seemed like a bird suddenly released. A big girl she had not seen the night before was filling vases with flowers. She was not dark like the other women, and she wore no turban, though a great coil of braids was wound over the top of her head.

"So," she began in pretty French, curiously softened, "you are the little girl who was taken by pirates? And you come from France?"

"Yes, and from many other places. I think I must have been nearly all round the world."

"But it is a very big world. And there are great cities and kingdoms over East. The Americans have one, though they began by calling their king a president. That is all wrong. And they have the queer English language, which is barbarous. Then, the English drove us out of Canada. I hate them!"

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She stamped her foot and her eyes flashed.

Sylvie look amazed.

"It was my mother's people. We were Acadians. And France had so much of this New World! It was New France; it would have been a splendid world, and no barbarous talk but the Indians'. They had no right to come and drive us out—send us away from the homes we had made."

"Oh," cried Sylvie, "then we are something alike. I left the old France. I don't know why—it was because"—her small brow knitted with thought—"we were to be taken to a convent, I believe."

"Oh, I was not born then. And my mother married and died. And my father went away somewhere, and has not come back. Mère Pichard had me and she beat and starved me, and I ran away. Then Nannete took me. She is a free woman and keeps a cake shop down by the wharf. It was not good for me, and Mère Milhet took me. But I think I shall become a nun. I go to school at the convent. I like the Sisters."

"Then you are a Catholic?"

"A Catholic of course. What should I be? There is only one true Church."

"And I am a—a Huguenot." Sylvie held up her head very straight, though she had a faint misgiving as to whether she was on the true side.

The girl shook her head doubtfully. "I will ask at the convent; the Sisters must know. You are too pretty to be a—to be an infidel! And French, too, although you talk not quite like us, a little more strong—harsh, that is it. Now I must finish my flowers. Mère Milhet will soon be home from mass, and then breakfast, and I go to the convent, where I stay all day."

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She darted off, but Sylvie followed her. "Oh!" the child ejaculated, stopping suddenly as something blue and glistening and beautiful rose before her.

"That is the heron. Oh, he is tame enough. Come, Piti. But I have no crumbs for you. Let the little girl stroke your neck. Your name is Sylvie?"

"How did you know?" with a bright smile.

"I heard them talking of you this morning. I had broken a rule yesterday and I had to say ten *pater nosters* by myself in the dark and then go to bed. So I did not see you. Stroke his neck, Sylvie. Piti Patty, this is a nice little girl."

"Oh, what a funny name!" Sylvie put her small hand half fearfully on the bird's beautiful neck that seemed to change to every shade of blue.

"When he was little, Mini found him with a broken leg. She set it, and when he began to go about on the bare floor he went pit-a-pat in such a queer way. Sylvie will give you some crumbs after breakfast. Then he will love you and follow you about."

"I don't know your name," Sylvie said, half bashfully.

"It is Laure Gorgas. When I become a nun I shall have a grand new name. It will be Annunziata, or Angelique or Veronique."

"Oh, Angelique is my cousin's name."

"And the young man—is he her brother or yours?"

"No, he is a cousin, too."

"He is very handsome. He was walking in the garden. I wish I had a cousin like that. I have no one," with a longing, regretful intonation.

"Oh, I am so sorry for you," cried Sylvie, sympathetically.

"And his name—is it a pretty one?"

"It is Gervaise Aubreton."

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Laure nodded. "But I think I like Henri better. Hortense de Longpré has a brother Henri. He is handsome too, and has such a sweet voice. Oh, what am I saying? I must not talk about young men. Père Moras will give me a penance."

"What is a penance? Susanne, at Brienne, used to talk of them. They are something bad—a punishment. But I would not like to be punished for talking of Gervaise. And Captain Strong was so good."

"That is different when they belong to you."

Laure had been snipping off an armful of flowers. Sylvie and the heron followed. Just as they passed by a waving cypress-tree, Gervaise met them.

"This is Laure," said the child, with a graceful turn of the hand. "And this is my Cousin Gervaise."

Laure turned red and her eyes drooped. Sylvie's cheek was suddenly scarlet as well, and she glanced timidly up to Gervaise, who was praising the garden and the flowers. Now the girl turned into a wider walk that led straight up to the broad sort of porch covered with a latticework of vines that made the entrance to the breakfast room, where Lucie, who was almost as fair as Laure, but had crispy, waving hair, was arranging the table.

"Laure! Laure!" said the voice of Mère Milhet, sharply. "Where have you been loitering so? The flowers should have been done long ago."

Mère Milhet had an odd little cap on her head, her prayer-book and her beads in her hand.

"The little girl came out into the garden and I could not hurry as usual. She asked me so many things. And about Piti. She was afraid at first."

Gervaise had fallen back; Sylvie stood uncertain.

"Go about your business," said Madame, peremptorily.

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"Sylvie caught her hand. "Oh, Madame, do not scold her," she pleaded in a soft tone. "It was so nice to find her in the beautiful garden. It seems a little like Brienne, only smaller and more flowers, I think. And there were great woods."

"There are great woods all about here too, and further north, forests impenetrable. Over to the westward no one knows, but it is said to be a land of gold."

"I should not like to live always on the ocean," said Sylvie, irrelevantly. "There are no flowers and birds, and nothing to walk on but the deck of the ship that rolls so it tires one's feet. I like this strange city. I wonder if we cannot live here always?"

Madame smiled. "Thou art a dear little girl," she said, with emotion. "And I am glad you like our city."

"And Piti—could I have a crumb of bread for him?"

"Oh, yes. Lucie, bring hither some bread. Why, he is already acquainted with you," smiling in a gratified way.

"There were swans at Dessiers. I used to feed them with Philippe. And we had a great peacock, with such a beautiful tail! Only he was cross and would not spread it when you bade him; no, not even for bread, which he would snatch out of your hand and run away."

Lucie brought the bread, and Piti's manners were admirable. He rubbed his neck on the little hand as if in acknowledgment. Gervaise came forward and wished Madame a polite good-morning, and Dolomine appeared to announce that breakfast was waiting and the ladies ready.

"I was detained a little. There was a very poor woman, with some children, whose husband went over into the colonies, and she had heard nothing from him. They know not where to go. Good Father Charlier took

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them in hand. Good-morning ladies," as the two guests entered the breakfast-room "Excuse me one moment."

She laid her beads and her prayer-book in a drawer, took off her cap, and put on a lace head-dress. Her hair was beginning to be plentifully sprinkled with white, and the cordiality in her face was most attractive. It seemed very homelike to the travellers after all their adventures, and the softened French fell on their ears like music. And oh, the fragrance of the flowers everywhere; the vista of the garden, where the sun seemed to make a shower of golden drops and quivers through the trees.

The breakfast was certainly delicious. They asked questions of Madame and learned many things about the quaint old town—old even then, more than a century ago—whose vicissitudes had been many, and which would always remain among the most picturesque of cities. True, the great fire in 1788 had swept away many of the quaint, ancient frame houses and left rubbish heaps and poverty behind. Streets had been widened a little, and better built. But before that, had been the terrible hurricane which had blown down the first Charity Hospital, endowed by the savings of a noble-hearted dying sailor, Jean Louis, who had donated his few thousand livres. And then had come to the fore Don Andreas Almonaster, who replaced it with a commodious brick edifice that later on was to be one of the landmarks of the city. And then he had built the chapel for the Ursuline Convent and the school, where the Sisters vainly tried to establish the Spanish tongue and Spanish methods stricter than the French, that had been inaugurated by Father Cirilo, who was amazed at the lax methods of good Father Dagobert, who was gentle of heart, and who went out to marry and christen and bury with great

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love and simplicity, and who joined in their pleasures and confessed the women with the admonition of the Saviour.

The new dwelling-houses took on a spirit of grandeur as well, and the Spanish manner, grandiose and rather ponderous, assumed an air of state that was bitterness to many of the older French settlers. For the Spaniards were obstinate and proud, and owned everything, whether for weal or woe; and the French were still dreaming of a time when the invader should be driven out and they come back to the birthright that D'Iberville, Bienville, and La Salle had given them. For had not the *Sieur Le Blond de la Tour* driven stakes and drawn lines, marked off streets and named them Orleans and Chartres, Bourbon and Condé and Toulouse?

And in spite of grander improvements, there were still old streets of foreign and antique aspect, narrow, with their overhanging second-story balconies, while the lower story looked almost prison-like, except where it opened on the secluded garden with its wealth of shrubbery, its magnificent trees, its allées bordered with flowers and tropical plants.

"What were they to do?" the travellers asked each other. The little luggage saved from the wreck must be brought from the *Mary Ann*, for she expected to load and go out again.

"Why not bring them here?" said *Mère Milhet*, out of her kindly heart. "Then you can look about——"

"But we shall not remain here," declared *Barbette*, glancing at *Gervaise*, who, for the present, was head of the family.

"I must find my way about this great land and learn where it is best to go to begin our search. For, if we

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cannot find my cousin Hugh, then I think all places will be alike until we go back to France."

"But I do not want to go back," declared Sylvie. "I want to stay here. I hate to live on a ship and be taken by pirates."

"They may leave thee behind, *petite*. Thou wilt not lack for care nor love, I think. Thy sweet face and voice will win thee both," and Madame smiled.

Barbette had meant to accompany them, but they overruled her desire. Gervaise and Jaques could attend to everything. So the ladies sent many thanks to the good captain, with instructions to pay him well, since they had been so fortunate in not losing their treasures.

They went out in the garden when the men were gone. Beside Pit-a-pat there was a magnificent striped tiger cat, with sleepy, yellow eyes, who was used to much petting. Mère Milhet brought some needlework, and entertained her guests with old stories of the city, to which Angelique listened with the greatest interest. What romance centred about the old town, for it did indeed seem strangely old, when one considered the dead and gone heroes planting it in a virgin forest! All the rest of the American continent Mère Milhet spoke of disdainfully. To her there was but one city.

It was noon when the men returned with a funny little wagon drawn by a mule. But all their luggage was safe, except one chest of clothing and bedding that could not be taken on the boat, while the numberless boxes of the good Dutch *vrou* in company with that were left in the hands of the pirates, and she remained inconsolable.

The Ten Broecks had found a vessel going to Mobile from whence they could ship to New York. Already every sailor had obtained employment. Captain Bolmer

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would go to New York. Captain Strong was to sail as soon as his cargo of cotton could be loaded, but he would give himself the pleasure of calling on the ladies after sunset, and thanking his good friend, Mère Milhet, for her kindness.

"No, no," with a shake of the head. "I am glad it so happened. M'sieu, the captain, has been very good to me; while I like not the grasping Americans, he is not of their kind, but a fair and honorable man."

Mère Milhet did not think it necessary to explain even to her priest that there were sundry little ventures in which the Spanish Government was overreached. There was much quiet smuggling to outside ports as well as up and down the river. Madame called it turning an honest penny. But both kept their own counsel.

Gervaise had added largely to his stock of knowledge during the morning. First, that New Orleans was a curiously thriving town and that it seemed to have gathered to itself many different peoples. Already French refugees were flocking hither, warmly welcomed by Carondelet, who had also opened the ports to American trade. And though about the levees and wharves the sights and sounds and commotion seemed almost like warfare, the volume of business was astounding. Abreast of the town lay the real shipping, and, farther on, the government warehouses, and the vessels of war that bristled with their armament, powerful in that day. The streets from the Place d'Armes were fairly straight and comparatively spacious, if poorly lighted at night by a royal lantern at some of the chief corners. Already there were cotton and sugar, which had a romantic history; flour, rice, still some indigo, lumber, tobacco, corn, pork and hams, hides, and, at certain seasons, fine peltries brought in largely by Indian hunters from the wilder-

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ness up above—everything teeming with activity and possible fortunes.

The Spaniards had taken mostly to the military and government service. Englishmen, Irish, Americans and French composed the commercial classes, while the Creole, handsome, suave and elegant in manner if defective in education, relegating labor to the slave and business to underlings, lending money, renting farms and plantations, full of pleasure and gayety, but adding immeasurably to the interesting aspects of the town.

“And why not stay here for the present?” asked Gervaise, enthusiastically. “Why should we all go on this hunt for Cousin Hugh? It is now a full year and a half since his last letter, which was to me, that he had joined an expedition to Detroit, which is somewhere on the great chain of lakes. Sylvie and Angelique could hardly endure the inconvenience of such travel. I was asking Captain Strong, and he says by all means go by myself. He will talk about it to-night.”

“But you do not think that Hugh——” Angelique’s breath came with a pang and a gasp. It always did when she faced the possibility of Hugh’s death.

“He may have written to Brienne. I feel curiously confident that I shall find him somewhere. There is a spirit of adventure in the very air here. Why a hundred years at Brienne would hardly have the incidents I have heard this one morning.”

Gervaise Aubreton seemed to have grown taller and more manly. Perhaps no one had kept note of the year’s changes, the responsibilities that brought him out of joyous boyhood, and given him forethought, courage, and the sudden aspiration for a more stirring life. And only this morning he had been hearing of the awful terror that had stalked through Paris, of the sweeping conscription, of the wars on every side.

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"And you would go alone?" Barbette asked the question with terrified eyes.

"Jaques must remain here to watch over you. We have enough to provide a home, and there is the sum left at Amsterdam. Yes, of course I should go alone," with a manly air.

Barbette felt relieved and yet anxious. Why should they not remain here?

"Where are you going, Gervaise?" Sylvie asked as they walked up and down the garden.

"Nowhere at present, dear."

"Oh, I thought—and you were talking to Barbette. Gervaise, I do not want you to go away."

She slipped her small hand in his and glanced up with beseeching eyes.

"There are many things to do, dear. And now I think we must have a home. I like this beautiful old town. We will go out and walk around it and find some pretty place."

"Oh, that will be delightful, Gervaise——" there was a plaintive, beseeching sound in her voice.

"What is it, dear?"

"Gervaise—I love you," with a child's simplicity.

"And I love you, sweet little blossom."

He caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"Gervaise," with a slow lingering, as if it was sweet to say over his name, "I am your little wife, am I not? And when I grow to be a big woman I will have a new wedding gown and veil and not be married by a priest? Why are we Huguenots? And Laure said this morning there was only one true Church."

"You cannot understand—you are so young. You will be taught all these things by and by."

And would that marriage ceremony have to be ex-

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plained, or would she grow into the knowledge by slow degrees? What if——?

“Come, let us go and find Piti and Baby. But I think Baby has outgrown her name.”

“And I want a tame blue heron in our house. Piti is so wise and funny. Where will our house be—not very far away?—so I can come and see Mère Milhet, who is so good. And Laure. Must I go to the convent to school?”

“Oh, I think not. I do not know about schools. But you must learn Spanish and English; I am going to learn English at once.”

Then Laure came home, and Mère Milhet said they might play for a while in the garden.

“Had Laure any doll?”

“Dolls are foolish,” said Laure, “unless it is a saint that you have out only on holidays. Zenobie has a great big beautiful one. It is Saint Elizabeth.”

“And who is Zenobie?”

“Oh, she is a rich girl. Zenobie Lavalette. She has everything—silk frocks, and pearls in her earrings. Her father is a sugar-planter. She will not have to be a nun, for she can get her pick of husbands.”

“Then I need not be a nun,” said Sylvie.

“Oh, you would have to be a Catholic first. And I suppose you are pretty enough to get a husband. Then, if you have some dowry——”

“Am I very pretty?” asked Sylvie, with charming *naïveté*.

Laure looked intently at her.

“You are prettier than Zenobie—yes. Your hair is like golden silk, and Zenobie’s is brown and straight. But she is glad of straight hair and her people are Spanish. She is very proud of that. The negroes and the quad-

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rooms have curly hair, but it is black. And your skin is so fair. Zenobie is older than you—ten years old. She sings like an angel.”

Sylvie was very glad to have some one say she was beautiful. Gervaise would care more for her, since beautiful people were readily loved.

“Angelique sings beautifully, too. She used to sing to the Marquise.”

“What Marquise?” asked the girl, abruptly.

“The Marquise de Brienne. We lived at Brienne when we were in France. It is not very far from Paris, and has such beautiful woods. She was Angelique’s aunt, and Gervaise’s, yes, and I think mine, too. She was always ill, and sometimes used to scream with pain. And then she died. She was Hugh’s mother, and the *Sieur Hugh* is somewhere here in America. We came to find him.”

Laure simply stared. She was exulting in the budget of news she would have to-morrow, about a little girl whose aunt was a marquise.

“Did you have a nice run?” asked *Mère Milhet* as they came in.

“Oh, delightful, *Madame*,” answered Laure, while Sylvie stared. They had not run at all, but sat on a bench and talked.

And Laure, remembering this when she said her prayers at night, beat her breast and wept, wondering why it should be so easy to say things that were not true. They slipped out before one thought. But if she took a penance on herself perhaps she need not tell *Père Moras*. There were so many things to confess. When she was a real nun she would not commit any of these sins. What was it that kept one so safe? And yet—with a long sigh—she could not have a lover and marry.

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Sylvie was so sleepy that she wanted to go to bed immediately after supper. So she knew nothing of the talk, but if the casting vote had been hers, it would not have interfered with the resolves.

To remain in New Orleans seemed quite the best thing. They must find a house, though Mère Milhet said there need be no hurry, they were welcome to stay until matters were settled to their satisfaction. She was enjoying her guests very much, and thanked the captain for his forethought.

"Then," he said, "I may see you all again. Give my best regards to the little one, and next time I come I shall provide myself with some gift for her. It is not good-by, but just a farewell."

Sylvie sat up in her little bed the next morning. A bird at the window was pouring forth a flood of melody. Barbette was combing and braiding her hair.

"Barbe, I want to stay in New Orleans always. I am going to learn Spanish—Gervaise said I ought."

"Yes, we are going to stay. It was decided last night," answered Barbe.

Sylvie sprang out of bed and pirouetted round the room.

"What are you doing?" demanded Angelique.

"Giving thanks," and Sylvie laughed. "Because I am glad from head to foot."

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CHAPTER V.

HOW IT LOOKED TO YOUNG EYES.

GERVAISE AUBRETON went wild over the romance of old New Orleans. He had not known much about Paris. For two years he had been in a Huguenot school, very quiet and retired, for though in a certain fashion France was much more liberal than Spain, and some of the old Huguenot families had managed to keep their estates, their standing was not always secure. They preferred quiet, and to remain unnoticed.

Hugh de Brienne had been seized with an explorer's fancy. The marvellous stories of the New World, the fortunes and adventures of several acquaintances who had gone thither, contrasted with the vapid life at home, induced him to spend a few years at least in America. The grand struggle the colonies had made for self-government was astonishing to him. When he left Brienne his mother bade fair to live years. She was a proud, strong, self-centred woman, and managed the estate so well that she was even jealous of any help or counsel.

He had been gone a year when her fatal disease set in, though at first she would not admit it to herself. Then the pretty De Chatilly cousin, a heart-broken widow, came and died, and left her little girl to the care of the Marquise. Gervaise had come home from school and not gone back. He kept some accounts, but much of his time was idled away rambling about the beautiful woods with Angelique, or they read together, taking parts in old plays. Youth found so many pleasures. Sylvie was generally their companion. They heard little news from

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Paris. Madame de Brienne had dropped out of almost everything, though when the pain was not too intense her brain was busy evolving plans for her son's welfare. At first she would not have him informed of her illness, and when word was sent at length, there was no certainty that it had reached him. Then had come their flight and the great overturn at Paris.

Out of it all Gervaise Aubreton had developed into manhood.

"It may be years before we go back," he said. "It is indeed a reign of terror, no king, no government; men ruling to-day and guillotined to-morrow. The estates of the old nobility are confiscated, destroyed, and Brienne may have suffered with the rest. As for me, I had little to lose," laughing cheerily. "I have a fancy I was dependent on the Marquise, who was kindness and good sense itself until her illness. And now I have a mind to cast in my lot with this new country."

"And become a subject of Spain!" cried Barbette, indignantly. "A Catholic, after all we have suffered at their hands!"

"But, my good Barbe, there is liberty in the very air here. Even the King of Spain, with all his resources and laws and promulgations, has not been able to make a purely Catholic country. There are plenty of French Catholics here, and French they are to the backbone, but they affiliate with the Protestants. And there are vague rumors in the air. I went to a wine shop with Captain Strong——"

Barbe held up her hands and uttered an ejaculation of horror.

"I did not drink any wine, though I was invited. The captain had some business to talk over privately. There was a group of men at a table conversing in very good

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French, except one who was a colonist. I liked his face. He was tall and fair and strong, with splendid blue eyes. And they think Spain cannot hold Louisiana for long. There are some troublesome trade restrictions, it seems, and a growing party that feel they would be much better off attached to the colonies. And there is also a presentiment that we shall go back to the care of France."

"And then?" queried Angelique.

"I am not going back to France," began Sylvie, decisively. "The garden is so beautiful, and all the fruits are delightful. Lucie gathered some for me. She talks so queer. It is French and not French either."

"Then you will stay with me, *petite* Sylvie," said Gervaise, smiling, to the child.

"Oh, I shall stay with you if the others go back. I do not want to be captured by pirates again."

She slipped her soft baby hand in his, confidently.

"And my plan is that we shall remain here for a while at least. I have been considering. And when we are settled I will go to Detroit. You go up the Mississippi River, and there are great lakes like seas. I do not think Hugh is there, but I may hear about him. Detroit was an old French colony, and has been fought about more than once. I want to see these brave Americans that have done such wonders and given so much liberty everywhere. The Spanish hate them. And the French are not over in love with them, though they came and helped them to fight for liberty. There was the Marquis de La Fayette——"

"They are not all Indians?" said Angelique, tentatively.

"Indians! Oh, no. The Indians were here first, it seems, and there are still a great many tribes. No, I think the Americans are from nearly all nations, but they

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talk English mostly. Oh dear—one knows such a very little!” and Gervaise indulged in a helpless sort of laugh.

“But what are *we* to do?” asked Barbe. “We cannot go on living on Mère Milhet.”

“But, thanks to your forethought, Barbe, we have enough to pay our way.” Then he did laugh with amusement. “The pirates were unusually good to us from what I hear of their exploits. Still we might have perished on the island. It is said there is a cave somewhere and it is a rendezvous for smugglers and pirates.”

Barbe gave a shudder as she glanced at pretty Angelique.

“We must have a house. Jaques can take care of you and look out for everything. I shall not be gone very long, and after that we will decide what is best. It is beautiful and picturesque all about. You must go out and see it.”

Angelique was won by the eager light in his face. There was a stir in her blood as well.

Mère Milhet listened to their questions and half plans. “Yes, there were *rentiers*—they were buying up old estates, and acres of land outside, putting up houses, and quite ready for respectable tenants. Oh, there would be no difficulty. There was M’sieu Lavalette—it would be well to see him.”

“Is that Zenobie’s father?” asked Sylvie, her blue eyes shining with sudden interest.

“What dost thou know about Zenobie, little one?” queried Madame, gently.

“Laure told me. She goes to the convent to school.”

“Laure has a tongue that is full long,” but Mère Milhet smiled as she nodded.

“Are there none but convent schools?” queried Barbe, apprehensively.

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"Oh yes, Madame. But the best Spanish is taught there. And beautiful fine needlework. Then they are trained in the elegance of manners and true religion. You do not believe this way, Madame, but you will see in time. There is much infidelity elsewhere."

"And this Monsieur Lavalette——"

"We might see him this afternoon. But as I said to our good friend, Captain Strong, there need be no hurry. Thou and thine are most welcome."

They planned to go. There was a midday meal of fruits and most delicious little cakes, and salads of the simpler sort; then the siesta. Sylvie did not wish to lie down indoors and took to the hammock swung between two great trees.

Ah, how delightful it all was! Birds were singing in the branches, not the joyous carolling of the morning hours, but low sweet notes, as if answering one another and holding tender converse. Then a mocking-bird lighted on a branch and flung out his note of defiance that not one of them seemed inclined to take up. Merry laughing notes, tender, entreating ones; a long whistle in which every earthly sound was blended, it would seem.

"Oh, say it again, say it over again!" and Sylvie half rose in the hammock, and would have slipped out but for Lucie's quick grasp.

"He is not good at minding," she said, in her soft patois. For already there were so many variations of language in the quaint city.

"If you had one in a cage and taught him——"

"He would ever be wilful, I am afraid. And he might not like to live in a cage, though some do."

"No, I would not keep him in a cage, after all. I like him best to fly about. And I like to run about. I should

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not like to be shut up in a room. That would be a cage for me."

Lucie smiled and then sighed. Her life was in a cage. Sometimes the bars seemed to contract.

"You like it all here?"

"Oh, so much! I am never going away. And—Lucie—some day I am going to be an American."

"Oh, not an American!" with a quick gesture of the hands. "They are common. They are coarse. Their women all work. Few of them have any slaves. They are not ladies."

"Do you like being a slave, Lucie?"

The blood shone in the dark cheek, many removes from black.

"I have a good mistress," she answered, cautiously.

"Did Madame buy you first?"

"I was born a slave."

"I don't understand. They were all servants at Brienne." A thoughtful line crossed the young forehead.

"France is a different country. Old Mère Lavalette came from France with the *Filles à la Casette*. She has some of the old clothes in a trunk. They are all very proud of it. She is almost a hundred."

"I want to see Zenobie," said the child. "And this old, old lady is what?"

"Her *gran'mère*."

"But why was she called that?"

"They were the King's maids sent over for the colonists. And His Majesty ordered that they should be fitted out with a trousseau. They are very proud of Mère Lavalette and the quality go to see her. But sometimes she will not be seen. She is queer."

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Lucie tapped her forehead to signify that the queerness was there.

"Were their—their husbands already here?" she asked, timidly.

"Oh, their husbands were the gentlemen who chose them. Men were very glad of wives in those days."

Sylvie smiled a little to herself. When the time came she would have a husband, and he would be glad of her. She gave her breast a little hug with both arms. It was quite delicious to have a secret.

The wind was blowing up fresh from the gulf and lakes about when they went out in the later afternoon. Fragrance vied with unfragrance. God had made everything sweet and delightful; man so far had not made much that was beautiful, yet everything, even the dilapidated houses, looked picturesque in their coat of whitewash; and fences and balconies and great high-pointed palisades were covered with riotous vines. Wild orange-trees scented the air.

They walked down Royale Street first. M'sieu Lavallette had gone to Bayou Teche and would be back shortly after five. Then they went to view the government houses and the Cabildo. Officers and guards in scarlet and blue and gold lace were lounging about, or sitting in front of the wide open cafés, smoking or drinking out of slender glasses, and chattering in Spanish and a mixture of French and Spanish with the vivacious softness of the Creole tongue, making a languorous "z" of "s's" and "c's," suppressions of inflections and confused abbreviations. Then there was the harshness of the Acadian French, and the drollery of the negro patois mingled with the queer dialect of the more newly imported African. Slaves of all descriptions, from the haughty, tall and imposing negress carrying her mis-

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tress's shawl and her bag, perhaps her great fan of turkey feathers put together with rare taste; some in snowy whiteness, some in old ivory tint, others in every variety. Free women of color perhaps quite as proud, and the old gentry, with their air of supreme indifference to everybody and everything save their own concerns.

There were the long rows of the King's warehouses, and in Toulouse Street the smithies of the marine and the shops for arms and ammunition. Opposite, and a short distance above, the Capuchins, with their church and some of their houses built of brick since the devastating fire. And here in Arsenal Street was the Ursuline Convent with its overhanging balcony, its peaked roof and dormer-windows, its cross, and the circular window just below it, called even then a rose-window. For more than sixty years the nuns had occupied it, and were to keep it almost a quarter of a century longer before they moved out of what was then a crowded thoroughfare.

Even now the streets as they stretched out ended in marsh lands and reedy ponds, with water-willow and palmetto and rank tropical vegetation. All along the levees were the bustling signs of busy life; vessels loading and unloading, and boats of all kinds to the slim, frail canoe, with a halfbreed Indian or an African trolling out a merry refrain.

Narrow streets, with houses of every degree, adobe or brick walls enclosing some, others almost to the edge of the sidewalk; arcades and suggestive inner courts half hidden by shrubbery; ponderous doors and batten shutters bristling with heavy iron bolts, balconies from whence came a gay chatter or the sound of harp and guitar; many houses, now two stories, with a high peaked roof and the chimney built entirely outside, of brick and stone.

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Stores and shops too, there were, cafés and doctors' signs, and drinking places full of sailors from every land it would seem, talking and gesticulating so fiercely one shuddered at the prospect of a coming fight.

Sometimes Sylvie shrank in affright; then her interest was aroused or her amusement quickened by the queer antics of the half-clad negro boys who would stand on their heads, walk on their hands, sing a song or dance a jig or chatter in some mysterious lingo for the merest reward. Gervaise had her tightly by the hand; Jaques was caring for Angelique, and the two women headed the little procession as they viewed some of the most important points. Then they wended their way back to the Rue Royale.

M'sieu Lavalette had returned. Although the story-and-a-half building had not a very pretentious aspect, and the sanded floor and wooden benches were extremely plain, their host, with a great show of politeness, ushered them into an adjoining apartment, where there were plenty of chairs and a great round table ornamented by several well-thumbed packs of cards and a queer blue plate that did duty as an ash receiver.

M'sieu Lavalette had the manners of a prince. Had he been receiving the guests in a royal apartment he could not have had more dignity and graciousness, and none of the effusiveness of an underbred person. Would they accept his hospitality and be seated? Then he sent his black servant for a pitcher of a kind of drink the Creoles manufactured to perfection, made of limes and oranges, and flavored with a decoction of flowers, it would seem.

Mère Milhet began the conversation. In the best French at her command, she explained the situation.

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They were, in a certain sense, refugees, but would no doubt go back for their fortune unless they found *Nouveau Orleans* so pleasant. They would not be able to tear themselves away. For a year at least they would need a home. They desired a nice comfortable place, not right in the heart of the city, and with a garden spot. There was a cousin who had come to America before, and they were to make a search for him. The young man, M'sieu Aubreton, would do that while the others waited here.

Mère Milhet had made pauses for the questions she knew would be asked, polite, tentative suggestions rather than absolute inquiries. And now she turned the guests over to M'sieu Lavalette.

A tall, rather spare man with a pale complexion, soft dark eyes and hair of brown rather than black, and a scanty beard with some chestnut tints. All the features were rather aquiline, but not severe, vivacious and friendly.

"A garden," in a soft, musing tone. "And not quite in the town?"

"And on high ground," appended Barbe. "Everything seems so low, so wet."

Lavalette gave a little shrug. "Yet tis mos' beautiful," he said, "with the river winding about and the lakes and bayous. A mos' beautiful city presentlee," with a soft lingering cadence on the last syllable. "Yes, I think I have one place. It is out on St. John Road. You know, Mère Milhet?"

"Oh, that is not far."

"The family go to Havana. I buy it with great cheapness. Roomy, beautiful, convenient. And such fruit, Madame, such a garden! The other is less in cost, but no such garden."

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"And the garden is most useful when one knows——" she glanced furtively at Jaques.

"Yes, Madame, The garden will be my care. I could not settle to complete idleness."

"If it were not so late——" M'sieu Lavalette glanced at his watch.

"We had better go in the morning," said Barbe. "Then we can look all about, and if we think this too large we can inspect the other."

"I shall be mos' happy to wait upon Madame. I have great honor in you," and he bowed. "Mère Milhet, I am so much obliged for your very good friendship. And we will make these people quite at home," smiling on the little group. "I have a daughter perhaps about your age," and he bowed to Angelique. "It may please you to be friends."

Sylvie came a little nearer. The soft voice and gliding intonation quite fascinated her.

"And is Zenobie your little girl too?" she asked, with charming timidity.

"*Non*—my little girl is Félicité, less than you. Zenobie is large."

She betrayed her disappointment at the first part of his sentence, but now a smile like sunshine quivered about her rosy mouth.

"Where did you hear about Zenobie?" he asked, glancing questioningly at Mère Milhet.

"Laure knows her at school. She talked of the girls to the little one."

"Thou shalt see Zenobie, but she will be too large for thee. Félicité is very sweet and full of mirth."

He pressed the little hand and Sylvie smiled.

At home they talked of the place and the plans and were full of interest. Laure had been unfortunate again

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and had a penance. She had said something not quite true, a failing with poor Laure, and she was not to talk to any one all the evening, and study her Spanish.

"I am glad I shall not go to the convent," declared Sylvie. "But the bell rings so beautifully that one has to listen."

"The bell must not make you a Catholic, even if you do listen," said Gervaise, teasingly.

"As if a bell could!" indignantly.

"Perhaps Zenobie will. You must have a care." And Gervaise looked apprehensive.

"Zenobie is very beautiful, Laure said," and Sylvie tossed her head as if coquetting with danger.

The town had sometime since overflowed its original boundaries. Not only in the business part and the shipping, but Toulouse, Royale, Chartres and many another street was stretching out into what seemed a wilderness only a few years ago. Thousands of Americans were settling on the outskirts and managed to get land, although the city had refused to sell to the English. And the road to the Bayou St. John was one of these lengthened-out places. The ground was a little high and sloped down to the river. There was quite a space in front bordered by magnolia trees, and a driveway up to the house, flanked by fragrant oleanders and blossoming shrubs. Its lower story was of brick and covered with trailing vines and thousands of roses. The upper story was frame, and on three sides a broad gallery overhung by an extended roof, and supported by brick columns. The wide doorway opened into a great hall, and on one side were the slaves' apartments; on the other, innumerable kitchens. The family rooms were upstairs, large, commodious, and airy, and at the back the grounds stretched out through a magnificent allée to a kitchen garden.

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"But who has cultivated it?" cried Gervaise. "It is in such splendid order."

"Father Antoine. Three or four priests have a house farther up the river. And when there was no tenant Father Antoine proposed to take it and divide if some one came. Their mission extends up for miles, among the Indians. You will find them good neighbors."

"It will cost too much, I am afraid," said Barbe, with a sigh, thinking of the grandeur of Brienne. "And a smaller place would do. We should want some servants——"

"They are easily obtained. Only this morning our housekeeper was begging us to hire two more servants, and the saints know we have a houseful now! Their mistress has taken a journey to the States and does not want to sell them at present. A most excellent cook and waitress."

"We had better see the small house," declared Barbe, decisively.

But the small house was on a narrow dirty street, with a cabaret only a few doors away. One could not put a pretty girl like Angelique in it! And the children playing about were not at all mates for Sylvie.

"Let us talk it over," said M'sieu Lavalette. "To a good tenant I might say less. Anything is better than letting it go to ruin with the damp. Come, I think we can agree upon a bargain. And there are several pieces of old furniture in it. Consider, Madame."

And they considered to such good purpose that the house was taken. And now could M'sieu Lavalette advise them how to dispose of some precious stones? Part of their portion was still in the hands of a banker at Amsterdam.

Monsieur Lavalette was profuse in his thanks to Mère

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Milhet for so good a tenant. The very next day he brought his wife, his daughter, a grown-up young lady, Claire, and the little Félicité, who was not more than five, and very shy.

They all made a friendly acquaintance. Madame Lavalette was very handsomely attired; a tall, imposing woman, but with a soft, almost caressing voice. She was so charmed to meet them. There were hosts of refugees fleeing from France, some not at all desirable, and she gave a dainty shrug to her finely formed sloping shoulders in their cloud of black lace. But *merci!* What could one do but run away with one's head in danger? And the poor King and Queen! But even their sorrows were at an end and the sweet mother of God would help reward them for their martyrdom. It was the poor children, after all, who were to be pitied. "You see we are French to the heart's core, Madame. The Spaniard may make his laws and we obey them, outwardly at least," smiling and twinkling her fine dark eyes. "But we can make reservation in our hearts and live our own lives in our homes. True, the Spaniard is not so bad, only we are French, and we all protested against being sold like slaves or cattle. So it is a pleasure to meet some one newly from our beloved country. We must be friends, and here is Mam'selle Claire, who will be very companionable for your niece—is it not?"

"Perhaps not quite so near as that," returned Barbe, embarrassed.

"Mam'selle Angelique, you must come and visit Claire. And whatever can be done for you, my husband will do most cheerfully. Do not forget you are among friends."

Madame had talked so volubly that though Sylvie had framed a dozen questions about Zenobie, she had not found a place to put in even one, though she had been

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much interested and almost bewildered by the rapid stream of words. Félicité had stared and occasionally said, "*Non*," holding fast of her mother's gown most of the time.

"She is only a baby!" declared Sylvie, disdainfully, afterward. "I am years and years older! And, Angel, I have been married and have a husband," with amusing importance.

"But we are not to talk of that, you know. It is a great secret. And then—Cousin Hugh may—may not be found," swallowing over a lump in her throat.

"I do not care for Cousin Hugh. It is Gervaise who is my husband, and whom I shall always love. And to think of my caring for a baby who cannot talk plain!" drawing herself up with dignity.

CHAPTER VI.

MAKING A NEW HOME.

No one of the household was happier than the little girl in the new home. The trees and birds and flowers filled her with a kind of exultant joy. That all these things were real; real figs, real oranges and lemons and apricots and peaches. And roses to be gathered by the armful. She ran and danced and sang, and was gay as a butterfly.

The house was very pleasant. It was raised a little on brick pillars, that there might be a circulation of air underneath, as many of the best houses were now being built. The stone stairway that led to the real apartments

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was easy and broad. It looked almost like entering a church. Over the kitchen department was a spacious dining-room reached by another stairway. Most of the apartments opened upon the long oval hall, out of which at both ends a grating-door led to the corridors without.

What to do for furniture perplexed Barbette. Where were there any shops or stores?

"Madame Lavalette will be very glad to tell us. There is another thing, Barbe——"

Angelique's face went such a vivid scarlet that Barbe lifted both hands in amaze.

"What is wrong, *ma chère*?"

"Nothing is wrong, but we must set some things right in the very beginning," exclaimed the young girl, with a touch of embarrassment. Then she came and put her arms about Barbe's neck. "You have been such a good friend to us, like a mother, Barbe."

"A mother indeed to the little one. But then I was like an elder sister to Sylvie de Chatilly, and when she became madame, sweet young thing, and her husband a good deal at the wars——"

Barbe paused and wiped away a tear.

"Yes. If you had been of her kin you could not have been more tender. And did you hear, Barbe, what a man was saying to M. Lavalette, that all titles were abolished in Paris and everybody was plain Citizen So-or-so?"

"Ah, the wickedness! But what can you expect when they put a king to death? It is well the poor Marquise did not live to see the day. But what of all this, Mam'selle?"

She raised the sweet, flushed face and glanced into the brown eyes that had golden lights in them.

"Perhaps I cannot explain this to you easily, Barbe, but

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you see we are two young girls and must have a protectress. There must be a head to the house, a Madame who can receive and order things for us and decide where we are to go and to take us out——”

“Oh, poor things! Yes, I see. And you have no relative——” interrupted Barbe, in a pained, sympathetic tone, studying the girl with tender pity.

“You must be the relative, the aunt, the Madame. You will take charge of everything, so why should you not have the credit, the position? And we will all pay you the respect. I was talking to Gervaise and he agrees with me. It must be settled before any servants come. And Jaques is to be steward and manager. You see you are both fairly well educated. You read Latin. You know the French authors so well.”

“Yes, I used to read to my dear Madame Sylvie. And the Marquise enjoyed it. She said it quite weakened many of the pains.”

“Well, then, you are to be a connection, a distant relative. It happens in many families that some are richer than others. But for you we should not have anything, and perhaps have been thrust into a convent. Who else would have thought to quilt diamonds and gold pieces in an old skirt? They would have taken the new and no doubt roused suspicion. And to say that I was a sick little child and bundle me up so that no one could tell! Oh, Barbe, we owe you everything!”

They both cried sympathetically with their arms around each other. So many evils might have happened, and here they were all safe.

“So you see, Barbe, this is the best thing to do. You shall be Madame Champe, as I introduced you that day to Madame Lavalette. And we shall call you Aunt,

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ma tante, they say here," laughing lightly. "And you must always hold yourself up like a real lady, Barbe—you have always been with ladies and never in the place of a servant."

"As you like, *ma chère*," the woman answered, meekly. She felt like a mother to the girls.

"There comes Gervaise. Oh, Gervaise, it is all arranged. I have been explaining to Barbe, and now she understands. It will not take long for us to get settled in new ways. And now we must see about a hundred things. It will be so delightful to feel at ease in a real home once more. If you were not going away——"

She was very fond of Gervaise in a sisterly fashion.

"Oh, I shall wait until we are in smooth running order. Indeed, I could wish I had no need to go at all. I like this queer, beautiful place. Everything seems so alive, so full of stirring romance."

"Yes, you must find Hugh," she said, gravely.

"I will do my best to trace him up. It is such a big country, Angel. Louisiana goes up north thousands of miles, and stretches out to the westward farther than man has travelled. Oh, how could any king give up such a grand domain! And the heroes! Père Antoine was telling me about the man who discovered the mighty river here. And they have all been glorious Frenchmen! All America should have been New France."

How bright and brave he looked in his enthusiasm.

Madame Lavalette was very kind about the furnishing, though it was M'sieu who knew the best places and was the real bargain-maker. "Not too much for our purse," Madame Champe said. "We must learn to have a closer garment—that is not quite it, I think," smiling.

"To cut one's garment according to the cloth," and

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Madame Lavalette showed her pretty pearly teeth in her laugh. "But you are so much better off than many of the refugees that you must indeed give thanks."

"As we do with our whole hearts."

Gervaise took a tour about with M. Lavalette. In a most unpromising second-hand place they found some fine old articles that required only a little furbishing up. There was not much needed in those days. Father Antoine begged they would buy of his simple house some chairs and settees made of a reedy grass the Indians had taught them how to weave. The money obtained in this manner was spent on the Indian missions. For many a brave, self-denying priest had come to the New World with only one object: to convert and civilize the heathen Indians. And as a travesty astute money-making men were pouring in and smuggling in Africans, with their fetich worship, their charms and incantations.

Many people hired slaves, especially those who expected to remain only a limited period. So to the new home came Marti, a tall, stout, well-ebonized woman with a magnificent turban over her woolly locks, great hoop earrings in her ears, and a jolly, laughing face; a most excellent cook; and a tall slim girl many shades lighter, who answered to the name of Viny. And then real living began.

Society, too, for Angelique. Madame Lavalette came over with an invitation.

"Thou must certainly accept, pretty one," she said to the young girl. "Thou and thy cousin. Madame Henriade saw him pass with my husband and she is, oh, so interested! And she has all the best society about her—a most charming woman, with lovers always at her feet, but true to her one love who perished at sea. It is thought she believes he may come back some day. It

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is a pretty little evening-dance. She is fond of young people, and is, what you call, irreproachable; so no young girl can be scandalized who goes to Rue Royale. Claire is a great favorite. And Madame's verdict admits anywhere."

"But——" began Barbe, rather nonplussed. "We have been here such a little while. And she has no attire. Oh, the closets and trunks full at Brienne!"

"That is not needful, Madame. A simple white gown—Claire has several, and one could be fitted over easily. Indeed, there is one of last summer laid away. Claire grew stouter, which is not necessary in youth," laughing gayly. "Mam'selle Angelique is so slim. Ah, yes, go she must, my good Madame Champe. I will chaperon them all. And your young man. My husband says it is a pity for him not to know people. He is so attractive."

"I will see what they think." Both were out rambling now. The world they had gotten into was so exquisitely new and beautiful they could hardly stay indoors an hour.

"Ah, but you must think for them, dear Madame. They cannot know; and it will not do for Mam'selle to grow up like a wild Indian girl of the forest. She is too pretty. And she must marry. Men are not so eager here about the *dot*. They are more generous, as you will find. They make fortunes for themselves. Though our girls will not be wanting in that respect. But the girl's market is best when she is young and lovely."

Barbe had never had time to think of Angelique's marrying. Events had so crowded upon one another.

"And to settle this, you must come over and sup with us, all of you, and the little one. My husband bids it. Then you can see the frock. Do not be offended, Madame. M'sieu is so charmed with all of you and the young man. Ah, if there had been one son for him! But the Blessed

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Virgin knew best, I suppose, when she made them all to be daughters and mothers like herself. Yes, you will come. Let it be to-morrow evening, then."

"What are we to do?" Barbe exclaimed, when the young people returned with loads of flowers. "Surely we cannot all go to supper. And we have so little to wear. How can I be right always as a great lady?"

"But you have been with ladies all your life, dear Barbe," exclaimed the girl, while a soft and generous light illumined her eyes and lines of tender pride made her face bloom with the resolution of coming womanhood. "Gervaise, did you not remark that, kind as Mère Milhet was, and always ready to think of you, she lacked the delicate breeding of Barbe. And you know the Marquise made an equal of you, and kept your place above that of the servants. You have your black silk gown that survived storms and pirates, and I can furbish up a pretty lace cap. And, Gervaise, would it not be lovely to go to a dance and see beautiful people?"

Her sweet face was all aglow and her eyes sparkling as she turned them to the youth.

"Oh, and that Madame in the Rue Royale is exquisite. We were passing, M'sieu Lavalette and I, two days ago, I think, when she leaned over the balcony and nodded. It is a nice house and a good neighborhood. And she was like some beautiful picture, framed in by the lattice-work and vines. Oh, yes, let us go, by all means." He was so eager to see a little of the bright world that had thrown out suggestions of enjoyment.

"She will take you there. It is going to sup——"

Gervaise laughed merrily. "After training so elegant an example as Sylvie, you need not be afraid. And, Barbe, there are shops down in the town where you can buy goods——"

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"I shall wear my blue frock, faded as it is, for it would not be worth while to bother to-morrow and tire ourselves all out. And Mère Milhet's Lucie sews beautifully—you know the good *mère* said she might come to assist us. But just now we will not fret. Oh, yes, we will go to the supper and please Madame Lavalette, who has been so kind. Gervaise, do you suppose we have forgotten how to dance?" She glanced up mirthfully and held out both hands. He caught them and they went whirling round as if their feet barely touched the floor.

They were young and happy. Why should they not forget the old things in this gay, glad New World? There had been sorrows for Barbe, but she still had her kind husband and these children, if they were not of her blood.

Sylvie was delighted to go to supper, though she would not see Zenobie. She was at the convent preparing for confirmation. She had been taken suddenly ill at Easter when the bishop came, to her great sorrow indeed, since that was a grand ceremony. And now there was to be a much quieter one in the chapel of the Ursulines. Two young girls who had come from the hospital and barely escaped with their lives were very anxious to be received in the Church. So Père Moras had found a considerable class.

Madame Champe looked quite the refined lady in her black silk that had been sponged and ironed by Viny. With some bits of black velvet and lace, Angelique's deft fingers had given it touches of style, and her cap would have done credit to a modiste. The young girl's frock was decidedly shabby, but Sylvie looked like a little angel in her fresh, white frock. Gervaise had gone down in the town and bought her a soft silken sash of pale blue.

"You must pardon me, Madame," Angelique said,

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sweetly, "but the time was so short that I could not provide myself with proper apparel to do credit to your kind invitation. We are not settled yet, and have hardly thought of clothes or competent needlewomen."

"Thou charming girl!" Madame Lavalette bent over and kissed her on both cheeks. "Thou wilt need little else than thy sweet face and fascinating manner to give thee a welcome here. Truly, I should have been filled with regret and had less esteem for thee if thy frock had kept thee away."

Out on the greensward a dozen or two rollicking negro children were cutting up all sorts of antics, to the great delight of Félicité. She beckoned Sylvie, who was soon laughing merrily.

"M'sieu Lavalette had quite a plantation. Like some of the early settlers, he had tried his hand at indigo and myrtle-wax, but neither had been a success. By great good-fortune he had been able to turn some of his property into building-lots and erect houses that brought him in some income. Rice and corn, cotton and tobacco, had proved the agriculturist's only staples. But now attention had been turned to the sugar-cane. It was true, also, that the slave-holders were beginning to care more for the negro progeny, and pickaninnies were made welcome with the thought of their future use and value.

Here were acres of sugar-cane in which M'sieu took great pride.

"Ah, you should see the plantations up above," he said, enthusiastically, when Gervaise spoke of its waving beauty. "Miles and miles of it, and it is our own genius that has made it a success. We are all very proud of M'sieu de Boré!"

"Ah, yes. That is the sugar manufacturer. I should like to visit him."

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“That you shall. It was a great risk, but he came out on top, as the Americans say. Ah, what an excitement it was and everybody went wild! You must know they had tried a great many times. But there was so much syrup, such heavy, poor sugar, not fit for marketing. And when indigo had failed and everybody was in despair—we have had so many reverses—and planters were now convinced the cane would make little else than syrup and that vile taffia. But M. de Boré had some new ideas or the saints had sent him a vision. Everybody said he would ruin himself. Well, the cane grew magnificently and was cut; and then came the grinding and boiling. There was a great crowd, for you see it was a matter of prosperity or ruin for many—prosperity for the whole country around if it succeeded. Ah, you can imagine how they stood and watched and doubted, and prayed to the saints. And then suddenly the cry went out, ‘It granulates! it granulates!’ All around everybody took up the word and ran hither and thither like wild men. At first they could hardly believe it; but when they saw the sugar, and the process went on without a break, the bells rang, and the devout hastened to churches and fell on their knees to give thanks. For M. de Boré not only saved himself, but the whole country. And it was no Spanish genius, for he was a French noble by birth, and had been in the King’s household troops as a young man.”

“And where is he now?” asked Gervaise, all eagerness. “Why, he, too, is a hero.”

“Oh, that was only such a little while ago; in the ’95. And he has gone on making a fortune for himself and others.”

“And were you there? I should like to have been,” cried the youth, with enthusiasm.

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"I was not there the first evening. But hundreds went out afterward. Each man wanted to see for himself. And you can hardly imagine the battery of huge caldrons, the great seething sea of yellow juice being swung from kettle to kettle, and the old *mousquetaire*, who had passed his half-century then, testing the thickening juice until he saw the shining drops crystallize into grains. And it was a greater triumph because his wife's father had been nearly ruined, years before, trying to make sugar."

"That seems to me as grand a triumph as winning a battle," said Angelique, her face flushed with listening interest and her eyes alight with emotion.

"Ah, Mam'selle, we sometimes dream of winning the other battle as well," and the Creole's eyes were fired with the spirit Spain had not been able to quench in all these years of dominion. "But, when they grind again I will take you to see. There are other sugar mills now."

"But I want to see this one and M. de Boré," Angelique exclaimed, with enthusiasm.

Barbe had been deeply interested as well. There was a charm about the spacious house and its really handsome furnishing that spoke of old France: the imposing woman who sat at the head of the table, the pretty daughter beside Angelique, who did not suffer any by comparison if her gown was faded; the well-trained servants, who moved about with easy grace; the china and quaint silver, the great jars of flowers standing everywhere, and the vines shaking off fragrance in the dewy air.

Occasionally Angelique glanced at Barbette, who sat grave and composed and allowed herself to be waited upon with quiet self-possession. Indeed, she had felt at

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home at once amid this luxury that she had hardly expected in the barbarous New World.

When they had adjourned to the veranda, Gervaise seated himself beside the elder man and could have listened all night to the romances. The ladies began to talk of the coming event in the Rue Royale.

"It would be very funny to go in a borrowed gown, Madame," laughed Angelique. "Would I have the fate of the little German girl who sat in the chimney corner until her fairy godmother came and transformed her, and who turned into her own old clothes again?"

"It would not be borrowed, *ma chère*. If you will accept it as a little gift. There will be enough saved up for Zenobie; and as for Félice, it will be a long while before she will need such things."

"Ah, Zenobie! Am I never to see Zenobie?" asked Sylvie, plaintively.

"Dear child. Are you so anxious? But Zenobie is a big girl. Ah, Madame, how soon they outgrow the sweet childhood! I am glad Félice is no older. Yes, you shall see Zenobie before long. And now, Madame, let us talk of these young people. Mam'selle Angelique, you will like Madame Henriade so much. And since you are likely to remain for some time, it is well to know some of the best people at once. I am glad to have you accept so cordially what is proffered in the same spirit. I hope you and Claire will be friends. She has companions, but none so near."

Then they went to the sitting-room that was kept altogether for the feminine part—a sewing-room, we should call it. There was a table of unfinished garments, embroideries, and everything piled up in a light, airy fashion. Marie, a graceful mulatto, measured the dress to the young girl.

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"It will be just long enough."

"Not too long for dancing."

"Mam'selle Claire has grown since last summer," and she smiled. "It will be just right, only too large in the shoulders." She surveyed Angelique's figure with admiration. "If I could have Mam'selle a little while to-morrow——"

"Yes, in the morning I will send——"

"Or we could walk over, Madame," answered Angelique quickly. "Gervaise and I walk about so much. The country is so lovely. Brienne seems tame beside it. True, the forests were beautiful and grand, but there is such a wealth of everything here. Do you ever have any winter, Madame?" with a charming, incredulous smile.

"Oh, yes. In my remembrance there has been ice and snow and nearly everything killed; but it soon grows again. It is a lovely country. And sometimes you must see M'sieu's *gran'mère*. She is almost a hundred, and came over from France with the King's maids. And almost at once she met M'sieu Lavalette. He was a tall, fine-looking man and in the service of M. de la Mothe Cadillac. They were just making the town then. And they had marvellous adventures. You must know at that period they were all searching for gold, and making discoveries everywhere. Ah, it was a grand but perilous time! And from a little settlement of a few hundred the town has grown to this. But we want once more to be under the Fleur-de-Lys of France. It will come," nodding confidently. "They have made many laws, they have tried to make us all Spanish, they have even sent their priests; but our good Father Dagobert was a match for them. Ah, he was so good. All the Indians loved him."

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"But you are all Catholics," said Madame Champe.

"Ah, but there is so much difference," with prideful energy. "Did we have auto-da-fés in our beloved France, and that terrible Inquisition? There was a new king in Spain, Charles IV., and Miro was then governor. The Capuchin prelate, Father Sedella, announced to the governor that he had been appointed Commissary of the Inquisition. Everybody who heard was wild with terror, especially when he notified the governor that he might need some guards to assist him late at night, as he gained lists of disaffected persons. Why, then you know, no one was safe. You might be snatched from your bed and put on board a vessel and taken to Spain, and no one know a word about you."

Madame glanced around at her interested audience, but there was the triumph of a climax in her flashing eyes.

"Did they dare take such a step as that?" demanded Gervaise.

"Wait—you shall hear. There came one night a great knocking at the Father's door. When he opened it he saw an officer and a company of Grenadiers. 'My friends,' he said, 'thanks for your ready compliance, but to-night I have no need. My plans are not yet perfected. Retire with the blessing of God.'

"'We are not in need of the blessing of the Inquisition,' was the answer. 'Dress yourself at once. We want you.'

"'What! will you dare lay your hands on an officer of the Inquisition?' demanded Father Sedella.

"'We dare obey orders in the name of Christ and his holy Mother. Come at once,' replied the officer. He could not refuse, or they would have carried him by force. So they conveyed him on board of a vessel, and the next day it set sail for Cadiz."

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“But what did the King do when it arrived?”

“Don Antonio Valdes took despatches from the governor to the King to remind him of the pledge that had been given that new colonists should not be molested, provided there was no other recognized mode of public worship, and that it was his, the King’s, wish that emigration should be encouraged. The mere fact of an officer of the Inquisition being in the province would drive people at once to the shelter of the Americans, who were growing more powerful every day. And he also informed the King that Don Andreas Almonaster had laid the foundation of the new Cathedral that would be a glory to the province, and that the population was largely loyal Catholics.”

“And is it really true that we—that no one besides your Church is allowed to worship publicly?” asked Madame Champe, with a protest in her voice.

The hostess smiled with an expressive gesture.

“There are many people coming and going all the time who are not Catholics, and you will find people of your own faith. They no doubt have their services. But the horrible Inquisition—no, we could not stand that! We are not all Spanish yet,” with a doubtful, musical laugh.

Claire and Angelique had made quite a friendship. There were various places of entertainment. There was a theatre; only young girls were not allowed to see all the plays. And there was walking along the levees and driving out to the lakes, where many had summer houses and plantations and boats, and went sailing where it was most delicious. And visiting parties—where they danced and played games.

But Barbe gave the signal for their departure, after expressing much pleasure and gratitude for the friendliness.

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Two slaves with lanterns were despatched to see them safely home. But there was such a magnificent moon that it was almost like day.

"I shall never want to go back to France," declared Angelique, with enthusiasm.

CHAPTER VII.

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SYLVIE begged to go over with them the next day. Yes, she would play with Félice, even if she was such a baby, and could not talk straight.

"I do wonder if we shall ever fall into such a patois?" laughed Angelique. "It is very soft and pretty. And then the slaves have another. What queer stories they can tell; tragic ones, too. It recalls the old Roman times when they transported people and made slaves of many in their colonizing."

Claire took Gervaise out on the veranda by one of those invitations that need only a smile and a glance of the eye. They were within range, but far enough distant to talk and laugh in comparative freedom. Claire was charming with the little arts, the vivacity, and a certain quickness of repartee that quite dazzled him. Her convent education was of the most superficial order, but it made her very agreeable.

Sylvie did not succeed so well with her companion. The little French girl had been so much with older people that she was not inclined to be indulgent to baby whims.

"My doll that I left in France was ever so much larger

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and handsomer," she said, boastfully, when Félice hugged her to her heart and would not let the visitor touch it. "And I had so many playthings! But I have grown a big girl and study a little every day."

"At the convent?" asked Félice.

"No," with dignity. "I shall never go to a convent. We do not believe in them."

Félice stared. To go to the convent was the ambition of every little girl's life.

"Then you will be a—a dunce—an imbecile."

"I shall not, either!" Sylvie's face was very red. "I can read, and I am studying Latin and Spanish a little, and——" what else did she know?

"But I can talk in Spanish. We were born so," declared the little maid, triumphantly.

Sylvie was nonplussed. "You can't be born two kinds of people," she said, confidently.

"But we are—oh, ever so many; but not Americans," shaking her head decisively.

"I like the Americans. Captain Strong was so nice to us. And we were captured by pirates. I think they were Spanish. I don't believe you ever saw a pirate! They have fierce long beards and black hair and guns and cutlasses and great sharp knives! Angel says it is a wonder we were not all killed. When I grow up to be a woman I shall be an American."

Now it was Félice's turn to be extinguished. She could not strike Sylvie as she did the slave-children when she was vexed with them. She glared a moment, then sank down on the grass and cried—"howled" would be better.

The nurse, who had been discussing love charms with an old negress who was slyly travelling round with them, ran forward.

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"Oh, *mon Ange! mon Ange!* What did they do to my beautiful! my cherub!"

"She fell down," said Sylvie, in a scornful tone. "And she cries a great deal over a little thing. I cannot imagine what she would do if she was wrecked on a desert island."

Then Sylvie marched off with her dainty head held high up in the air while the nurse soon comforted her charge and trotted about with her on her shoulders, while the little hands were tightly grasped in the kinky wool. This was an unfailing solace to Felice.

"I can't endure that cross baby!" declared Sylvie, as they were walking home. "And I am not going to like Zenobie, either."

"But you have never seen Zenobie."

"I do not care. I do not want to see her. Do you like Mam'selle Claire?"

"She is charming," declared Gervaise. "I am to dance with her to-night."

"Gervaise!" Sylvie stopped short in the path, her face aglow with temper, her eyes with passionate lights. "Gervaise—you shall not dance with Mam'selle Claire. You shall not go to see her. You belong to me. You may dance with Angel all night long, but Claire, never, never!"

"What a tragic little maid! Am I your prisoner?" His eyes had dancing lights in them, and there were merry curves about his lips. Her temper amused him.

"You are my—I am your little wife, Gervaise." She stretched herself up to her utmost height. There was a strange dignity in every line of her slim figure and in each feature.

"Sylvie, dear, listen." Angelique put her arm about the child. "That was——" no, the child could not under-

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stand. How perplexing that ill-fated ceremony would prove—only—if Gervaise should come to care for her! Could it be undone? “Remember what Barbe said. You are such a little girl now and this is not to be talked about. When you are larger it will all come right. Meanwhile you must not take absurd dislikes. Félice is a spoiled baby, but they all love her, just as your mother would love you if she were alive. And if you mean to be a sweet, amiable woman you must not give way to tempers. I am afraid even Gervaise, who is so fond of you, could not love a bad-tempered, quarrelsome being. Could you, Gervaise?”

The young fellow’s sweet nature asserted itself over his love of teasing.

“She is not going to be bad-tempered, little darling as she is,” and he stooped and kissed her fondly. She was minded to draw away at first, but his smile was so winsome.

“And see, Sylvie—I will dance with Angel——”

“It is for Madame Henriade to find you partners. She will be your hostess. And it would be ill-bred to dance with one lady all the evening. Why, a man does not dance every time with his wife; he would be laughed at!”

Sylvie leaned her cheek down on Gervaise’s arm. She was relenting a little. Père Lavalette was very delightful; he had petted her, and Claire had brought her some delicious little cakes. She would not want Gervaise laughed at before a whole room full of people.

Viny had a great dish of fruit for them, and Barbe was full of interest about the frock.

“It is very pretty,” replied Angel. “There is a fall of exquisite lace around the shoulders—fine Breton. And when I demurred, Madame said, laughingly, that the lace was only lent. Claire makes beautiful lace and she has

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promised to teach me. They are all so kind. And they will come down here for me."

Was Claire so kind? Did Angel mean to like her very much?

"The swing is put up properly," said Viny. "It is so delicious and shady. Will you come? You can fly almost up to the tops of the trees like a bird."

Sylvie ran away eagerly.

Gervaise paced up and down the veranda. Claire's bewitching tones sounded in his ears, and he could see her soft, alluring eyes. It was the first time any one out of his own circle had moved him to admiration.

"Angel," pausing suddenly before her as she was mastering a difficult stitch in embroidery. "Angel, that marriage may prove to be an awkward thing after all. I suppose the Perrier estates were in the mind of the Marquise. What children we all were then? And now there may be no Du Chatilly, nor Brienne, either. But if Sylvie should grow up thinking, believing——"

"She will understand presently. Barbe and I have decided to let her talk as little as possible about it. There is nothing but waiting until she is older."

"Of course—if I can find Hugh—and then suppose he should repudiate the matter? It was only by the priest, and we are not of that faith. Angel, who kept the contract—the parchment we all signed?"

Angelique looked up in surprise. "Why, I do not know. The priest rolled it up—I can see his long, thin fingers now," and a shiver went over her. "Barbe must have it."

If Hugh should not be alive, and if Sylvie insisted—But *he* was quite free. There really was no question of honor or fidelity.

Angel asked Barbe an hour or so later.

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"The parchment that we all signed! And no one read it, either aloud or to himself. What a piece of work! I am quite sure the priest took it with him. But why he should want to—— It's queer business and if Sieur Hugh comes to us it must be as he wills. A child's fancy may change many times. Let us not worry. It is ill carrying loads to the top of the hill that are meant for the valley."

As for Angelique she looked simply ravishing in the white frock with the lace about her shoulders, and the broad sash that shortened the waist and gave an exquisite contour to the girlish bust. Viny, who was lady's maid as well, had done her dark hair in a great coil on the top of her head and fastened a rose spray that drooped down on her shoulder. Sylvie was wild with delight, and danced about her with a child's gayety.

The house in the Rue Royale had all the windows aglow and sent golden gleams out through the veranda vines. In one corner were stationed the four violins that were discoursing sweet music even now. There were several rooms that could be thrown into one; there was some grand faded furniture, and quaint old pictures in costumes of a hundred years ago. The floors were polished; there was a wealth of flowers everywhere.

Madame Henriade had been a widow for years. Married out of hand to a man she had only seen twice, she had, for seven years, been a docile wife. Since then she had revelled in her liberty, but it was not license. A little, brown, wrinkled elderly woman was her constant companion, and she had somehow wrested from society a certain right to entertain Americans as well as her compatriots, the French, and the Spanish grandees beside the Creole gentlemen; but she was careful not to clash. Every-

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body who came was suave and amiable under Madame's laughing, languishing eyes, even if they quarrelled the next day in the street. To be invited was an honor no one thought of refusing. And having heard M. Lavalette's enthusiastic description of these refugees and the dangers they had passed, she must see the pretty girl and the attractive young man.

Only two or three times in her young life had Angelique partaken of pleasures. Never quite like this. Even the elder women who had come with daughters and nieces were gay and vivacious, and had odd little stories to tell that were clean and wholesome and full of fun. For enjoyment was the watchword. Madame had the rare art of keeping her guests alive—of never allowing the interest to flag. Cards had more amusement here than elsewhere. But Madame never allowed gaming at these evenings.

If Madame Lavalette was a delightful hostess, what word or commendation could do justice to Madame Henriade, the young fellow thought? There was something magnetic in the touch of her hand. It was not lily-white—she was not fair herself—but of that soft hue which is not olive, but a kind of sun-brown, with the rich red blood shining through. The little hand was brown and dimpled, and had the softness of velvet. When she talked with it you could easily translate its meanings.

"I am charmed to see you," she said, with smiles in which you could feel the earnestness. "You have been quite a hero, in my mind."

"Indeed, I did nothing heroic," he protested. "It was our good Dutch Captain who gave up all he had and beggared himself for our lives. And we just accepted."

"Then I should like to see him, too," smiling. "It is

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not so many who escape those terrible pirates. One can hardly believe any good of them. And your pretty cousin—how could they let her escape?”

“Oh, that was the captain’s thought, as well. Yes, he and Madame Champe engineered it through most successfully. But we might have perished even then if a kindly American captain had not seen our signal of distress. It seems an adventurous world, Madame. And I have a still further quest on my mind. The cousin, who is the head of the house, is somewhere here in America and I must go in search of him.”

“Ah, that is like the lost needle in the hay, unless you know. Ought I to give you my best hope? You are over young——”

He laughed lightly. “How many of the explorers and discoverers were quite as young! Oh, Madame, there are such wonderful tales told of them that it fires one’s blood. Are the heroic times gone? Are the heroes in the graves of De Bienville, and Du Salle and Tonti?”

“You shall come and talk of them some day and tell me of your cousin. Now, I must find the prettiest girl for you to dance with, for you have a dancing mark in your shapely figure.”

“That would be impossible, Madame, where all are so pretty,” and he smiled as he made an inclination of the head. “But I asked the favor of Mademoiselle Claire——”

“Ah, I see!” nodding in a satisfied way. “Mam’selle Claire is an astute general; she leads. Go your way, then, and come back to me. Now I must provide for your cousin, who is French to her finger-tips.”

Angelique already had some bees buzzing about the fresh sweetness. How fascinating it all was! Women in quaint and pretty gowns and soft laces; a sprinkling

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of officers, for though it was sometimes half suspected plots were hatched in the vine-clad corners and secrets leaked out, it could never be said that Madame evaded any courtesy due government officials.

Ah, how delightful to dance with the fervor of youth! Gervaise was thrilled with happiness in every pulse when Claire smiled upon him, which she did with such fascinating innocence. And when she danced with some one else he was plunged into momentary darkness and anguish. But then, here was another bewitching demoiselle who talked her half-French with the sweetest Spanish accent, and mixed up both languages in a distracting manner, while her soft dark eyes pleaded for indulgence.

"I must learn Spanish," he announced, laughingly.

"But you talk such exquisite French, M'sieu. We are always glad, for, see, it is to be the language of our beloved province some day."

Gervaise shook his head. "There are all the French. And the Creoles—then the Americans——"

"But they are English and——" she made a gesture of disdain. "They are pushing upstarts. Let them keep their side of the river. They cannot dance. They are boors!"

The violins blew out some soft wailing notes on the perfumed air. The young girls went meekly back to mother and aunts with an air of having done their duty to their hostess. Ah, what beguiling demureness! Then a preliminary flourish—another measure to thrill the pulses—and young men were beseeching again, young girls studying the faces of their chaperons, then floating off in waves of delight.

The refreshments were of the simplest order. Small tables were brought out on the verandas, and the gay chat

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charmed the young fellow. There were girls besides Claire Lavalette, he found.

"Was it very nice?" asked Sylvie of Angel the next morning. "Did you dance. And I hope Mam'selle Claire did not have any prettier frock than yours."

"It was beautiful—some thin pink stuff with black lace. And there were so many splendid frocks and fine ladies. Madame Henriade is enchanting, did you not think so, Gervaise?"

"She is perfect, and so cordial. Barbe, we are asked to go and take a little dinner with her, quite by ourselves, and a walk. She is coming to pay you a call."

"Is she prettier than Madame?"

"She is quite different. Madame Lavalette is imposing; Madame Henriade is a little smaller, quite slim, indeed, and very graceful. And her hands really talk; she can express so much with them. She is not fair, and real French, not Creole. They talk in a such a queer fashion and get their sentences mixed. But Madame Henriade is perfect."

Sylvie sighed to think she was not grown-up.

"And does Claire dance beautifully?"

"Yes," answered Gervaise. "But they all do. I hope some one will ask us soon again. And did you remark that tall thin young Creole that danced twice with you, Angel? He is related to the brave young De Noyan, who was in the uprising against the Spanish in '69. And to think that he had just married the lovely daughter of Lanfrénière. They tell such a pathetic story about him. Friends had planned for his escape, and, while the Governor General would not listen to any word of pardon, it was said he would wink at the flight. But heroic De Noyan replied that he would live and die with his associates, and that their only crime had been

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love of their own country. But he came of the De Bienville heroes."

"I liked him very much. I wonder they are not afraid to talk so plainly. Ah, how thoroughly French they are at heart! But there *is* something in the air—one can feel it."

It was a little curious that New Orleans should have struck the first blow against the Spanish power, and have dreamed of a republic in the New World. On the Atlantic coast there was disaffection among many of the colonies at the exactions of England, growing more burdensome, as the people expanded and imbibed the principles of self-government. And though the leaders of that long-ago episode paid the price in their lives, it was good seed well sown. All along here and there were Spanish settlements; they held Mexico and the islands of the Gulf, and many a fair land they had drenched in blood. A century and a half later their last stronghold was to be wrested from them, and the new nation to dominate the fairest portion of America, that holds romances enough for all time.

"I wish you would talk about the pretty people, instead," began Sylvie, petulantly. "And the Rue Royale sounds like a palace. Isn't the Governor's house a palace?"

Angelique laughed. "Not at all like Paris," she answered. "Oh, Gervaise, do you suppose they will destroy those beautiful old places? I have not half seen Paris myself. And one can't help dreaming that one day we shall all go back——"

"No, I shall stay here," declared the child. "I like the garden and the beautiful fields and the figs and apricots. And Father Antoine is so funny."

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"Have a care lest Father Antoine converts you," said Gervaise, with teasing pleasantry.

"I like Viny, but I told her I didn't believe in the beads that she prays to. They are all saints. As if a saint would come and live in a bead! Why, you could smash it all to fragments; you could bury it in the ground, and then where would your saint be?"

"You are a daring little rebel! But you know we agree to let other people think their way. And we knew many fine Catholics in France. Then, we have come here for refuge, in a certain way, and we must respect the laws and customs."

"You talk so—so grand I cannot understand you," she returned, with an air of weariness that would have done credit to twenty.

"But you must be a sweet little lady, or you will not grow up a big sweet one. They smiled so last evening, they said such pretty, gentle things——"

"Well, if you want to like them so much better than you do me, because I am not big and nobody asks me to dances——"

She was half crying as she flounced away.

Gervaise bit his lip to keep from laughing, yet he looked grave and perplexed. She might deride Viny's religion—Viny who was good-natured and adored her just as she had adored some others, that being a part of her business in life that slaves learned unconsciously; but Father Antoine! He was learning that there was, after all, little real liberty of religion under the Spaniard. Emigrants who came were allowed their own faith rather grudgingly; children born in the province were to be baptized in the Church, and educated in the faith and the Spanish language. He had found some Huguenots who kept to the old faith, and who worshipped in their homes

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and were not molested. But it was the Spaniard's country.

Gervaise caught Sylvie and turned her about.

"You naughty little thing," he said, good-humoredly. "Come, kiss and be friends. And you need not even be jealous of Mam'selle Claire. The bees hovered about her as if she had been made solid of M. de Boré's sugar. I had only two dances that she promised beforehand."

"I am not jealous of—of anybody." There were dainty little signs of her yielding.

"And this afternoon we will all go out and see the queer things in the town. Angelique wants to do some shopping. And I heard Barbe say you must have some new frocks."

What feminine creature could resist that? She smiled and her pretty face dimpled.

"Is it true?" she cried to Angelique. "Are we to go shopping?"

"Yes. But we must get over some lessons first."

"Sylvie went cheerfully. In one corner of the veranda where the rain could be shut out by glass doors Angelique had arranged a pretty nest. Gervaise and Jaques had made her a very convenient desk out of some boxes, and a sewing stand with some shelves. The young fellow had picked up a few old books, and borrowed some of M. Lavalette. He was very much in earnest, learning both English and Spanish, and had found an old Frenchman, who kept a doctor's office in order and gave lessons to eke out the small salary. In turn Gervaise imparted his knowledge to Angelique. And since there was no school for Sylvie, and a governess seemed beyond their reach at present, she taught her and found it a really pleasant occupation.

There were some shops already in the principal streets,

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but those who knew did not depend altogether on these. The Spaniard had placed many restrictions on trade that were most vexatious, but there was an undercurrent that possibly was winked at, or a privilege paid for, perhaps. Goods of all kinds were smuggled in. There were so many ways in the innumerable bayous where a small boat could find shelter in the mass of over-hanging green, and take out bales and bundles adroitly covered by some one in waiting. It was not only the delta Creoles that coquetted with the pirate vessels at Barataria, which brought in rich stores from captured vessels, to be resold in the town under the very nose of the authorities.

Madame Lavalette piloted them. Angelique had really seen nothing of the town. Here was the plaza, where Almonaster had torn down the barracks after the sweeping fire and rebuilt the old Cabildo, now a handsome and pretentious edifice with arched doorways and broad paved space, or court, that led to the real entrance, and here old New Orleans' residents greeted each other and discussed business or news or pleasure, and watched the passers-by. It was two stories, with large circular-head windows and iron balconies, and an ornamental cornice rising high above. A little further on, two rows of stores built of brick with broad tiled roofs and dormer-windows, and gay and bright Spanish awnings. This was the fashionable retail quarter of the town, and remained so for years.

From the Place d'Armes the streets gave a bright, busy aspect for a short distance, then subsided into dwelling houses of stucco, a few of brick and still many of wood. Some in the glory of new whitewash glaring in the yellow sun; others toned down to all softened shades of ivory until almost brown. Here was the theatre, where ladies and children went of an afternoon. There were

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women out promenading, the negro waiting-maid with fan and satchel walking gravely behind, now and then lifting Madame's skirt over some puddle. Pretty, gayly attired children with their turbaned nurses, some of them ordering in autocratic style, or lading the black hands with fruit or budgets. Sylvie looked on entranced.

"And now they came to a curious rambling row with the pitch of the roofs all one way, in some instances giving a sharp outline to the street, and a curious second-floor balcony at the side with a long, shaky stairs to the ground. Then a little one-story shanty, one would almost call it, only alongside, perhaps for two hundred feet, a high wall with a doorway and wire pickets on the top, half hidden by beautiful overhanging trees. Gay laughs and the tinkling of a guitar told of a charming household in the flowered court so secluded. Then a dark, unpretentious one-story place with a window beside the door, where various stuffs were lying, faded by the morning sunshine.

They walked through rather a narrow passage with a counter on one side where there were piles of common goods—gay gingham, jeans, and Madras headkerchiefs (greatly admired by the better-class slaves and free women of color), coarse cottonades and muslins.

"We want to inspect some of your nice goods, M'sieu Basnage," said Madame Lavalette, and she led the way through an apartment that presented an appearance not unlike a modern junk-shop. This again opened on a sort of enclosed court that could be shut at will, but was now open to the garden, full of fragrant herbs and flowers.

"*Oui, oui, Madame,*" answered the dark, wrinkled little man, whose black eyes sparkled as he rubbed his hands together. "Madame is mos' welcome. And Madame's frien's," glancing rather suspiciously.

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"Yes. They are *émegrées*, who were taken by pirates, and lost all they had except a little that was left behind. Very nice, trustworthy people, M'sieu Basnage."

"Ah," with a long, sympathetic intonation. "Dose pirates are terreeble," and he shook his head lugubriously. "And dey haf anoder name not so bad—what you call—privateers? But it is sad, sad, Madame!"

"So you must give us good bargains, M'sieu Basnage."

"*Oui, oui*," with a low obeisance. For Madame Lavalette was one of his very best customers.

Excellent bargains they certainly were, for Barbe had shopped not a little for her pretty young mistress, and made not a few purchases for the dead Marquise, and was a woman of experience. But Angelique was dazzled by the display of elegant goods, and no longer wondered at the handsome attire she had seen at Madame Henriade's. M'sieu Basnage was very obliging, and extremely moderate in his prices. Then, he would send the parcels home that very evening; and so they threaded their way through the narrow passage again, and almost held their noses at the smell of the commoner goods reeking with dye-stuffs.

"Now I am going to the convent to see Zenobie. Little one, wilt thou not come and get thy heart's desire?" and Madame smiled at Sylvie.

The child's heart was rent almost in twain. Curiosity to see the strange place swept over her like a great wave and almost brought out a smile of assent. But she was not going to like Zenobie, and she would not lend her small countenance to nuns or convents. So she stiffened her back.

"Thanks, Madame, but not to-day. I will go home with *tante* Barbe."

"Oh, but you could all come. There are many visitors.

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Except—the young man,” laughing with peculiar softness.

Sylvie took his hand. She was quite sure and safe in the protection of one who could not be allowed within.

“Madame will excuse us now,” returned Barbe, in her quiet manner. “And accept our thanks. It has been a delightful excursion. We shall be most glad to renew it at some other opportunity.”

Zenobie was doing very well, and would be confirmed next week. After her first communion she would come home as usual. There was a talk about the dress and veil, and then Zenobie was allowed a little walk in the garden with *ma mère*. The child was eager to hear about these new people who had stayed at Madame Milhet’s. For Laure had played off the beauty and sweetness of Angelique and Sylvie, and the charming young man.

“Claire may like the young lady, Angelique,” she said to Laure afterward, “but I am just going to hate that little upstart, Sylvie! Nurse said she was cross to Félice, and she is a Huguenot—a bad, wicked girl, and I shall have nothing to do with her. *You* may like her as much as you please, Laure!”

CHAPTER VIII.

NAUGHTY SYLVIE.

A YOUNG man walked up the path—a good-looking, jaunty fellow of eighteen or so, quite mature, as Southerners are wont to be—and yet with all the charm of youthfulness, a happy smiling face, curling black hair, and

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dusky black eyes, with a soft shading on his short upper lip. He had a slender bamboo cane in his hand with which he switched the heads of some tall grasses. A mocking-bird in the hedge began a roulade, and he whistled an accompaniment.

“Mo’sieu Aubreton—is he at home?”

The voice was soft and rich. Jaques looked up from the young trees he was pruning and met the smile. Then he glanced up to the balcony.

“Mam’selle Angelique, is Gervaise up there?”

“No,” answered the clear girl’s voice. “He and Sylvie went for a walk.”

“Will you be seated, M’sieu? I think he will be back presently.”

“Which way did they go?”

“Down toward the creek, I believe.”

“I will saunter on. I may meet him.”

There was a path through the wilderness that some day might be made wide enough for a road. All manner of things were in a riotous tangle; there were many such places about. Sometimes the friendly Indians made a clearing and erected a wigwam, and all around the trees would be charred. Willowbrakes and reedy ponds, wild ducks, herons, and birds of almost every description settled themselves as soon as their natural enemies removed. Stray bands of Chickasaws, friendly enough if one did not trust them too far, or they were not incited by the English to venture upon depredations. Over westward, large plantations; up above, settlements of Canadian French, or friendly English, who no longer felt bound to their own government—they had been neglected by it until their friendship was bought by the mighty hand of trade.

Gervaise was very fond of rambling about. The great

river on one side, the mighty lake on the other; the bustling activity, the busy crowds, were only a stone's-throw, it seemed, from the quiet of this wilderness.

Sylvie started up hosts of birds from the marshy wilds by throwing a stone or stick, and laughed to hear the screams and calls.

"They are scolding back," she cried, gleefully. "Oh, Gervaise, look at the beautiful white ones, with their long necks. And oh, the babies!"

The two swans, with their progeny, were floating majestically on a space that widened out to a miniature lake. Great lilies were abloom at its edges—white, yellow, and a pinkish tint. They both stood silent.

A curious, low, flute-like whistle startled Gervaise. He had already heard so many weird and horrible stories of runaway slaves, and treacherous Indians hiding in the morasses. But no—it might be some strange bird.

"Is it some one calling to the swans?" inquired the child. For the head of the flock suddenly wheeled about, stretched out his long neck, and emitted a peculiar hissing sound through his pink bill.

"A snake, more likely. Sylvie, I ought not have brought you here——"

"And not to see the swans! Oh, if I had some bread to feed them with!"

"You couldn't get near them. Come."

Sylvie gave a defiant curl to her lips and clasped her hands behind her. A figure appeared around the clump of willows.

"Aha!" cried a merry voice.

Gervaise smiled and advanced a few steps.

"De Longpré," he exclaimed. "Is it happy accident or design? But you never could have followed our winding way."

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"Something of both. I went to your house. You see I *can* find my way easily. And as I came nearer I thought I heard voices. If you had been alone I should have gone straight up to Lavalette.

He laughed a little as he said this, and Gervaise, in spite of himself, colored.

"Your sister?"

Sylvie had looked shyly out from under her broad hat.

"No. There are three of us related, and not very nearly. I don't know that I could trace it myself. Second or third cousins."

"Then is she not even Mademoiselle's sister?"

"No; not even that," was the answer.

"I belong to Gervaise," said the child, proudly, as she came and slipped her hand in his.

"A pretty piece of property, truly. Six or eight years may tell a different story. I had an errand for fair, and it is wonderful that I should find you so easily. I am sent from Madame Henriade. She wishes to see you. It is to join a pleasure party."

"A pleasure party?" in joyous surprise.

"Yes. You have not been down Point Grasse, Lake Pontchartrain. Madame has an old relative, General Vilaneuve. Report has it that he adores Madame; but he is quite old enough—no, perhaps not quite for a grandfather," laughing gayly. "Every year he has a birthday. It makes one old too fast," with an airy toss of the head. "When I am say—forty, I shall have a birthday only once in five years."

"Does a birthday make you older every time?" queried the child, who had been listening intently, and struck by a new thought.

"I believe they have that bad habit."

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"Then if you could have two in one year——" it was a new way of growing up, and pleased her.

"It might do very well for little ones like you."

"That is what I want it for ; just for myself."

"And why do you want all these added years?"

Sylvie hung her head and glanced shyly at Gervaise, who gave a half frown.

"But about this party?" began the young fellow.

"Ah, Madame Henriade has to manage—what do you call it—chaperon it. And the General is fond of young people."

"I am such a stranger——"

"She is giving you a chance. My fine fellow, I was jealous this morning when I heard her so enthusiastic. And I told her so. '*Mon fils*,' she said, 'have I not been considerate of you, finding pretty girls for your partners. And now you can choose for yourself.' Which is true. She is charming."

Henri de Longpré did not add another of her commendations: "He is a young refugee; well-bred, well-mannered. We need every one to crowd out these pushing Americans. We must bring him into our circle. He has the flavor of Paris."

Gervaise laughed with some embarrassment.

"It was delightful—the evening at her house. She was most kind."

"And I am to bring you back with me."

"What!—to the Rue Royale?"

"Yes, at once."

"Then I must return. You are quite mysterious. Come, Sylvie."

"No, there is no mystery. Only she does not wish the invitation to be quite second-hand. I merely come with

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the message. I proffered my services. Otherwise you would have had a little note sent by a messenger."

"Come, Sylvie," he said again, without looking back, and took a few steps with De Longpré.

Sylvie was affronted. She made a sudden plunge in the thicket.

"Where is the child? Sylvie!"

She was shaking with mischievous laughter. From a little opening she saw him turn toward the pool, and look up and down, in perplexity.

"Why, it is odd! One might easily get lost in this wild." De Longpré glanced around.

Gervaise was vexed. "Sylvie," he cried, authoritatively. "Come hither at once."

There was no answer. Then he began to stir among the bushes. De Longpré followed his example.

"I have her. Here she is!" he cried. "Oh, you little Mischief! You are a wood nymph wild."

The Mischief evaded his hand and ran. There was but one clear space, down to the little lake. Up around the side of it—she would lead them a chase, for she was fleet as a deer.

Alas! the path was clear, to be sure. But just as she turned, her foot caught in a root that had been washed bare by frequent inundations, and the impetus sent her face-downward in the pool, just as an instant more he must have caught her frock.

The splash startled the swans and there was a great outcry. The water that had been tolerably clear was a muddy ooze.

"Just here, Aubreton. Oh, she does not rise. She is fast in something. Here, I will wade out——"

"No, no!" Gervaise stepped into the water.

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"Take this stick. It may be deeper than you think, and these places are treacherous."

Aubreton felt his way carefully, and then touched something that was still making a swirl in the water. He stooped and brought up Sylvie, but she did not even struggle.

"Oh, my God, she cannot be dead all in a moment," he cried, holding up a drooping figure.

"Wash off her face. She went down in the soft mud. And she may have struck something."

With the skirt of her frock Gervaise washed the mud from eyes and mouth and clinging hair; but she lay there limp and still. He chafed the little hands. What did one do to a drowned person?

"Let us take her home as soon as possible."

Gervaise looked at his friend's white suit and the muddy burden before them.

"No," he said. "Go as quick as you can and bring M'sieu Jaques, and—a hammock. Meanwhile, I may bring her to."

De Longpré was off like a flash. Gervaise took off the pretty apron that had been white but a moment ago, and washed it tolerably clean; then bathed her, chafed her, rolled her over on a grassy spot. There was no bruise on her forehead. Her nose was full of the soft ooze; her mouth he had already washed out. Oh, what if she were dead—the dear, pretty little thing! and he kissed her tenderly—put his hot, flushed cheek to hers. Was that a sigh? Then there was a sudden red flash—gone in a moment—but it gave him hope. Her heart was beating. There was a little flutter in her neck and the eyelids—another sigh.

"Sylvie, Sylvie," he cried, with ardent longing.

She was not dead. The sudden quivers ran over her

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and stopped; started again. Then she opened her eyes—beautiful as the sky above.

“Angel——” she murmured. Then a moment or two she studied Gervaise, and struggled to rise.

“Oh, what is the matter? What makes me so wet and cold? And I feel so queer,” with a great, rending shiver.

He had not the heart to scold her, though she richly deserved it. The sweet face was so pitiful.

“You fell into the pool——”

“Oh, oh! Gervaise——” she threw herself in his arms, and began to cry in a heart-breaking fashion.

He tried to comfort her by endearing terms such as Barbe used. But she sobbed on until she was quite exhausted, and looked pale as a lily. He was half afraid after all. And in all his glowing young life he had never seen any one really die—though the Marquise had sometimes looked dreadful, but not in this lily-whiteness.

He cuddled the wet little thing in his arms and hushed her with a soft, low sound that was not singing. She went fast asleep, so soundly—and he was not sure it was right; he must study up on some of these things—that, when Jaques and the hammock came, they put her in it without even waking her, while he was briefly telling over the adventure.

“I would not let your friend come, for he really was exhausted. Barbe took him in hand. What a sight you are, to be sure, Master Gervaise!”

“Master!” Gervaise laughed and Jaques colored.

“Yes. Luckily we do not have to go over public ways. Though I have seen people quite as bad down on the levee, and they did not seem to mind it.”

“No doubt. To my thinking, all the mud in the world must have been gathered up and dumped here. How do

you suppose it is, over on the other coast—the States or Colonies? And though Amsterdam, and some of the other Dutch places are very wet, it is a clean sort of wet. I should not have built my town hereabouts.”

They shouldered their burden, and went their way. It was very warm now. Once Gervaise insisted on stopping to see if Sylvie was still alive. That roused her.

“Oh, what are you doing?” she cried. “And where have I been? I feel stiff and cramped. Let me get out and walk. I won’t be carried like a baby!”

She made it quite impossible for them to carry her and they put her down. They were nearing home, so they yielded. She looked at her muddy frock, her wet shoes and stockings; and her face was scarlet with shame as remembrance rushed over her.

“Gervaise,” softly, and with compelling sweetness, “was I very naughty? I ran a little ways—I—I——” and the tears gathered in her lovely pleading eyes again. They were enough to undo any one.

“You did not mean to fall in the pool! I can believe you there. Perhaps that was the punishment for running away when I called you to come. That was the naughtiness.”

The charming penitence faded a little in her face, and the lips, red enough, now quivered.

“We were going to have the whole morning, you know—you said so. And then he——” nodding her head toward the house.

“You jealous little baggage!” laughingly.

“I shall not like him. And if he takes you away——”

“I am going myself, willingly,” with a touch of sternness.

“Oh, you do not like me when you meet other people.

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And yet I cannot help loving you. There is no one else but Angel and Barbe. Jaques does not care much for little girls. And Viny is black——”

“I love you when you are not naughty. You are very sweet when you are good. And I am not sure I could have saved you but for De Longpré. I was sorely in need of help.”

“Saved me!” There was an incredulity in the eyes, and the whole face made a protest.

“Yes. You went down in the soft mud, on your face. You would have strangled very soon. Then you would have died.”

“Oh, I don’t want to die,” shivering with terror. “And there are horrid snakes, and—are there any alligators——”

“Not there, dear. Do not think of it.”

“And did you jump in after me? That is why you are so wet and muddy. Oh, I am so glad!” and she seized one hand with both of hers, pressing rapturous kisses on it.

He felt a little sorry and annoyed at the eager gratitude, and the utter lack of penitence.

“Oh, I can’t go up that way!” she cried, suddenly. I look like—oh, a thousand times worse than that—what was it sat on a rock and combed her hair? You were reading about it! Jaques, run and open the side gate—I won’t go and meet everybody——”

“Yes, do, if you please, Jaques.” Gervaise did not exactly care to meet everybody either. There was a gate in the high fence always fastened on the inside.

Jaques went, and they two walked rapidly down to the place—almost hidden by trees and vines. They could hear the sound of voices on the lower veranda.

Angelique and Viny hurried along with Jaques.

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"I've said a good dozen times I'd grease this old bolt with something, if no more than a pork rind. And now I'll do it this very day," said Jaques, tugging at the rusted bar.

It flew back suddenly and nearly tipped over the man, who paused to catch his breath.

De Longpré's story had been very vivid, with much Spanish translated into French, which made it seem more voluble and added to the possibilities of danger. Angelique clasped the little girl to her heart now with a transport of gratitude; and Viny's patois was picturesque and pathetic with much invocation of saints.

"But I'm so wet and muddy," and Sylvie began to cry, looking at them helplessly.

"There, dear, you shall be bathed and dressed——"

Viny picked her up in her arms and ran up the back staircase, uttering words of endearment with every breath.

Gervaise meanwhile made himself presentable, and joined his friend, who had been explaining his errand and his excuse for carrying off the young man at once.

"Don't be too indulgent with Sylvie," he said now, with his usual gayety. "She is very wilful and heedless."

Barbe could not forbear kissing her as if she had been snatched from some great peril.

"But you were a very naughty little girl to make so much trouble and cause such a fright! I'm sure I hardly know what should be done to you. You ought to be punished in some way."

"I didn't mean to fall in the pool, dear Barbe," and her soft arms were about the elder's neck—her rose-leaf cheek, with the delicacy of childhood, pressed against the mature one. "Something caught my foot. And, oh,

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Barbe, there were such beautiful swans—baby swans. I should like to have them caught and brought here. I do not believe they belong to any one else. And such great lilies!”

“But if there had been no one, you would never have risen to the surface——” and Barbe shuddered at the thought of her beautiful darling buried in the muddy pool—torn and disfigured by reptiles.

“Ah, but I wouldn’t have run then. And we often play at running away—Gervaise and I. He lets me catch him, for his legs are so long he could get away—couldn’t he?”

“Child, child, what a bother you are! What shall I do with you? When I was a little girl, I was whipped when I had been naughty.”

Sylvie looked very grave; and after a moment’s pause, said, with bewitching gentleness:

“You may whip me if you want to, Barbe, but I don’t believe Gervaise would like it. And—at the convent—they kneel on the hard stones and say ever so many prayers, and only have bread and water. Barbe,” with sudden energy, “I will sew all the afternoon and not break my needle nor put in long stitches. And you know I hate to sew——” There was a piteous strand in her voice, and a pleading light in her eyes.

“That will be excellent. I should be sorry to have you worse than the little Catholic girls, when your religion is so much better.”

“But there are such beautiful saints, Barbe——”

“And we have saints, too. Oh, child, no end of saints and martyrs, as you will learn some day. But we do not pray to them. God is taking care of them, and they have no more sorrow in heaven. We must thank God for that,

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and be brave and good ourselves—then we shall meet them. And your blessed mamma.”

They went to the dining-room. Viny was setting out dishes of fruit, and various confections from Marti's skilful hands. Angelique was looking over a Spanish primer. She held out her arms.

“We must remember it was largely her own fault,” remarked Barbe, severely.

“But we are glad to have her back, and not much the worse.” Angelique was strangely moved by the beautiful, beseeching light in the eyes and the dazzle of the golden brown lashes—the small mouth that seemed all aquiver with emotion.

“And I am going to be so good—you will see; I shall sew all the long afternoon.”

“The meal is ready, Madame,” announced Marti.

The meals had rather puzzled Barbe. At Brienne they had been following the earlier Court fashion; luncheon was at eleven and dinner at two, with an elaborate supper at six. Here that meal was often called dinner.

“Where is Gervaise?” asked Sylvie, rather timidly. “Oh, has he gone with M'sieu de Longpré?”

“I wonder—if ladies are tabooed?” Angelique gave a half vexed, half ironical laugh.

“Then Mam'selle Claire cannot go. It is a great house on a lake, and there is to be sailing and dancing; I heard them talking. Will the young men dance together? That would be funny!”

“Not any more than girls dancing together.”

“And they do at the convent. There are no men or boys. But Laure doesn't dance. She thinks it sinful in any one who is going to be a nun! Oh, I am glad I am not to be a nun! It must be very dreary just to teach

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children, and count beads, and say prayers, and not to think anything but grave thoughts."

"There are plenty of other things. They take care of the sick in the hospital; they visit the poor and teach them how to keep their houses and bring up their children. I am not saying all of the adoration is right; and I never could believe beads had any virtue as a go-between you and God—or relics, or bones of dead people——" said Barbe.

"I don't understand"—and a knot of thoughtfulness gathered in Angelique's forehead—"why we were all to be taken to the convent! The Catholics had no right to Brienne."

"Jaques heard the plot." Barbe raised her brows and glanced at Sylvie underneath her drooping lids. "There was another priest who came with Father Mambert, and they talked in the end of the corridor—as I told you. Jaques did not set out to listen, but he thought he had a right when he heard part of their plan. Whether that ceremony was of any account—well, we cannot tell until Sieur Hugh comes back," and Barbe sighed.

A quick throb of delight warmed Angelique's heart and sent a rosy glow to her face. More than once she hugged the hope to her inmost soul that Hugh de Brienne would repudiate it utterly.

"Things were beginning to be so disturbed, you know. Ah, yes, it is a good thing to be out of it all, and let all the fine estates go;" yet Barbe sighed. "Only, there really is no new France. The English have taken Canada, and all the colonies are united, it seems; and here we are under Spanish rule. Sometimes I think La Belle France will go straight on to destruction, as that grand old Rome did that had once conquered nearly the whole world."

Sylvie was interested in the deft and pretty fashion

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that Viny was preparing her orange, and crusting it over with sugar. Then, she could pull the skin off the plums so dexterously that the child laughed to see the pale green mass with pink and purple veins lie temptingly on her plate.

"I never thought much about the government of countries," Angelique began, with an awed air. "It is such a strange, big world; it frightens me. And one can see so much prosperity depends on the wisdom of rulers."

"But women are not to govern it, child. That is the business of men. They study it out."

"But women have governed kings, even, and made them do many unwise things," said the girl, sadly.

Some of the unwise things, as well as the women, were not to be discussed with a young girl. Barbe was silent.

"Angel, did you think M'sieu de Longpré handsome?" Sylvie crowded down the last sweet morsel of plum, but her voice had a rather smothered sound.

"Very good-looking—yes. And elegant manners."

"Handsomer than Gervaise?"

"Why—that is quite largely as one thinks. Why do you wish for a comparison?"

"What is a comparison?"

"I believe it is examining the relations of things, with a view of discovering their likeness or unlikeness; and whether one is better than the other."

Sylvie stared, and was swamped in thought for some seconds.

"Gervaise is best," she said, triumphantly, "so, of course, he must be the handsomer. Laure talked of M'sieu de Longpré. His name is Henri. He has a sister—Hortense."

"It is highly improper for little girls to talk so much

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about young men. If that is what they learn in convents——”

“And then they have to do penance.”

“Miss Laure is not a good companion for you. I hope Mam’selle Zenobie will be better.”

“Ah, but I am not going to like Zenobie.”

“You are a spoiled child. I wish we could find a *gouvernante* for you. You need some training,” returned Barbe, sharply.

But she was very good all the afternoon. She sewed, and it was a great hardship; she read a Spanish lesson, and then she went out in the garden with Viny and listened to tales of the Indians, that certainly were not as pleasant as talks about the young men.

It was dusk when Gervaise returned. They had not only had a talk and an elegant refreshment of fruit, but they had strayed about the old town and learned many queer things. They had been through the *Cabildo*; and, as it was Friday, the Governor was present, as there were some important matters on hand. The *Alcaldes* had the ordinary small trials in their chambers—little disputes and debts. But to-day, the scene was quite imposing by the presence of the *Alferez Real*, or Royal Standard-bearer, which was still held by that public-spirited Don Almonaster. Below him sat various officers, in all the pomp and grandeur of their gorgeous robes. And though Gervaise could not follow the subject in hand, he thought the judicial robes very imposing.

“And, to-morrow, there will be some marionettes at the theatre, to gratify the women and children,” he said. “The little old theatre is not very grand, but they have some quite good things, I hear. The men go mostly in the evening.”

“But what are——” Sylvie looked puzzled.

"Marionettes? A kind of puppets or dolls, managed by wires, and they do many funny things. You would like to go?" smiling to her.

She looked askance at Barbe.

"She doesn't deserve it," said Barbe.

Sylvie glanced up with pleading eyes.

"Angelique will like it, too—will you not, Angel?"

To go to a theatre was something quite new. Angelique's face was almost as eager as Sylvie's.

"To-morrow, then. And so many are out that afternoon. Then, we must take some sails and some drives. Oh, there is so much to see," with enthusiastic youthfulness.

"And Madame Henriade—what was the plan?"

"That is ten days off. Oh, it is going to be quite grand. And I was to ask you, Barbe, what day, early in the week, it would please you to receive Madame?"

Barbe looked startled. Being the head of the family, when one had not been born to the purple, had its drawbacks.

"Oh, you need not look frightened, my good Barbe. Madame is charming and affable, and French," laughingly. "I wonder that Spain can really hold the country. And on the Bayou Têche there is a settlement called Little Paris. We must go and see that. Perhaps if we *do* settle, we may prefer that."

"But we ought to know about Sieur Hugh."

The search did not appeal so strongly to Gervaise as it had a fortnight ago. After various vicissitudes, Michigan had become a part of the colonies; and Detroit, where Cadillac's brilliant dream of a great city had clothed itself in possibility, was no longer French, but a mixture of all settlers. And to search for Hugh seemed an almost useless proceeding. He would not say so now;

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it might look idle and cowardly. So he only gave a sigh of acquiescence.

The little old theatre went its way long ago, yet it had some gay triumphs in its day. Gaming was the great pastime for the men, as dancing and balls were for the young and the women. Of balls there were all sorts, from the fine private affairs that were very select, through numerous gradations where halfbreeds congregated, and indulged in drinking and fighting. Intellectual amusement there was none, although there were some fine families and educated householders who had valuable libraries. But Spain had never been famous for the higher advancement of her people, and though the colony, in some respects, had been more profitable than under the earlier French auspices, the inhabitants felt that it had been a conquest; and they were in the hands of a power they detested.

The theatre was largely filled with women and children, many attended by the colored nurse, and most of them decked out in their best attire. As for the plays, they were of the puerile sort—pantomime, with amusing incidents; fights, baffling each other, gaining an advantage, laying traps, yet everything having a mirthful sequence that called forth much merriment; even the worsted and left-for-dead on the field coming to life again.

There were so many pretty, bright-eyed children that Angelique enjoyed the audience more than the plays. Then, there were dances, with an accompaniment of banjos; some Spanish songs. French had been interdicted five years before, when "La Marseillaise" had been shouted out with wildest enthusiasm, amid much waving of handkerchiefs, the whole audience rising to their feet. Carondelet had arrested many and exiled some, and rebuilt the fortifications, as well as erecting a large battery

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where Toulouse Street opened on the river front, ostensibly to protect the city from outside enemies, but also to be turned upon the inhabitants, if need occurred.

De Longpré had joined them.

"You look none the worse for your adventure, Mam'selle," he said, with a merry smile lurking in his eye. "And I was afraid you would hardly come out of it successfully. Did you get scolded for being so wilful?"

Sylvie flushed and hung her head. After a pause she replied: "They were all very good to me."

"Ah, who could help being good to you, with eyes like that!" he declared.

Sylvie flushed, with a rather awkward feeling, not being hardly old enough, or sufficiently used to compliments, to accept gracefully.

"I was very naughty," she commented.

"But you will confess, to-morrow, and that will restore all things."

"I said I was sorry to Tante Barbe, and Angelique," she replied, gravely. "I am not a Catholic."

"But you will be one presently."

"I shall not be a Catholic or a Spaniard," and she held her head up very straight.

Outside it was darkening up already. There were some lanterns and some pine torches; for, as yet, there were no street lights, though soon afterward the Governor had them put up on different corners, and in the public places.

Negro women were selling spiced cakes and candied fruit; and some who had a large patronage were making a savory smell, frying *saucisse*, which they deftly rolled in a slice of bread and supplied the crowd. And though flowers were blooming everywhere, there were girls sell-

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ing nosegays, and young men buying them; Indian women vending their wares, also calamus and sassafras buds.

CHAPTER IX.

COQUETTING WITH FRIENDSHIP.

MADAME LAVALETTE invited them all to the chapel to see the confirmation. It was a saint's day. There would be a procession; and the girls, gowned in white, with wreaths and veils, marching to the slow music, and singing,—“not as grand as our Easter or Whitsunday, but well worth hearing,” she explained.

Barbe was too stanch in her faith to so much as step over the sill of any of their chapels; and as for the mummeries of the nuns, with their praying to saints, and carrying about relics—she would have none of it. Gervaise had already softened. Claire Lavalette's entreating eyes that could look so serious and so persuasively sweet, had gained not a little power over him. And Madame Henriade, with most noble and patriotic sentiments, was a Catholic.

“Oh, yes, you will come and bring Mam'selle Saucier,” she said. “There will be some very sweet music. And it is a pretty sight. Only there were so many before; and we did so regret Zenobie could not be with them. It was such a provoking illness; not dangerous at all, but she could not hold up her head. And your pretty little cousin! Oh, yes, you must all consent.”

He did his best to persuade Angelique. And though

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she had an inward quaking terror of priests and Jesuits, and could not get over the mystery of their sudden departure from France, she had a girl's curiosity to see the ceremony. Then, the Lavalettes had been most kind to them, and they, alas! were in the Spaniard's country.

Sylvie declared at first she would not go, and clung to Barbe. But she hated to be left out; and when she saw Angelique tying her lace scarf over her head, she suddenly flew to Viny, who had her dressed in a trice.

The chapel of the Ursulines was very plain. The church was, as yet, unfinished, but they held high services in it. They went in the chapel with the Lavalettes. There was group of kneeling girls, who were chanting in unison with the nuns, behind the screen. The music was very devotional. It died away into silence that was impressive. Then a priest, in his robes, came through a narrow door, followed by two nuns; and, when he had reached the aisle, the girls rose slowly and followed them, two and two, their faces downcast, their veils floating around them, crowned with their flower-wreaths—white down to their dainty slippers.

The relatives walked behind them into the church, and were seated. The prayers were in Latin; the service, in Spanish. And, when it was all through, the procession re-formed, and marched out on the plaza. Now began the gala time. A few fireworks were set off with great care; they had learned their lessons well about fires. Flags were flying; flowers were showered on the little group of white angels, flanked by friends, that they should not be jostled. Spanish ejaculations and wishes were uttered with the "Grace a Dios" of the French. But what began rather reverently at first was presently given over to jollity. When the procession had retired to the convent, the cabarets filled up; the crowds in the street

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grew noisier; young men sent bouquets up to the balconies, where they had friends lingering in the corners.

"It was a grand thing," said Laure to Sylvie. "But I am glad to wait until Easter; it is so much grander. And you have a much larger procession. Now Zenobie will go home, but I can tell you she has made up her mind she will not like you."

"As if I cared! Henri de Longpré is going to bring his sister. He is sure she will like me."

"What!—Hortense?" gasped Laure. "And when did you see Henri?"

"Oh, he has been at the house!" Sylvie's air would have done credit to the woman, rather than the child, and it nettled Laure. "And, one day we were out—I was walking with Gervaise. He and my cousin went to a dance; and they are going somewhere—to Lake Pontchartrain."

"And you? Do you go with them?"

"Oh, I am only a little girl. But I went to the theatre. It was very funny."

"Oh, yes, Zenobie goes. And Hortense. If I had a brother I would go, too." And at that moment Laure hated the thought of being a nun. She examined Sylvie's gown critically. It was fine and trimmed with lace. Sylvie's hair was tied up high with a pretty ribbon, and she looked like a lady. Yet she had been wrecked, and lost everything, and was an *émigrée* from France—a new-comer! A new-comer, who would make friends with the best and the rich. A wave of ungovernable jealousy swept over her. And not a Catholic! Not caring for the Church, nor worshipping the good, sorrowing Virgin, who had held her little baby to her breast many a time before the days of anguish came.

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The flash went out of the eyes; the features suddenly turned serious, the corners of the mouth drooped.

"What changes you so, Laure? A moment ago you looked—I was almost afraid of you."

"I was very wicked, Mam'selle. I am going to do penance——" The lips were sharply set.

"And you call me 'Mam'selle'——" Sylvie laughed softly.

"Yes. I ought always. When you first came, no one quite knew. Mère Milhet did not think you had much money—after the pirates—and everything. And now you are rich and go with the grand people——"

"It is very queer. But you knew them all, first."

Sylvie looked much mystified.

"Ah, yes—but—I am not of their kind. When we are in church, it is all one—the rich people beat their breasts, and cry *meâ culpâ*; and at school it is alike. But I could not be Zenobie's friend at her house," she paused; she was still too proud and angry to say "nor yours."

Sylvie understood in her heart. She was very sorry. It was not altogether money; they were not rich like the Lavalettes and Madame Henriade—but everybody was glad to ask Gervaise to their pleasures and entertainments.

"And so, you see, if I am a nun, I shall have respect with the best of you." Laure straightened herself with a sense of triumph.

But, ah! how hard the pleasures of the world knocked at the wayward little heart! Already, from one and another, she had learned about them. There were several ball-rooms—perhaps not *quite*, with a mysterious emphasis on the word—where women went under cover of satin

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masks, and laughed and danced and coquetted, and had compliments paid them and lovers sighing over them. Laure knew one girl—she was not in school now, but soon to be married—who, it was said, had been a paid dancer at the Salle de Condé, where quadroons of the better class, women, handsome as houris, were to be seen. Thérèse had gone with her mother and her lover; and told wonderful stories of the gayeties, until some of the tales leaked out, when she was seriously reprimanded, and left the convent, because she was so soon to be married. The lover was a tall handsome fellow, with blue eyes and red-brown hair, and had some business in the Floridas. Was the mandate of the Church everything? Were not Sylvie and Mam'selle Angelique happy, and troubled with no qualms of conscience over what they did, because there was no confession in their church? Church, indeed! It was no church at all, as they would find, when they knocked at the gate, and had one glance from Saint Peter's eye.

Sylvie's tender little heart pitied her.

Madame Henriade came to call. Madame Champe was gracious and dignified. She understood that she must play her part well, for Angelique's sake. When Monsieur Hugh came, they would go away somewhere else, and begin a new life; perhaps back to France, when the trouble was over. For Barbe firmly believed that a new king would arise from some of the royal branches, and rule again with majesty. This rabble, called a Republic, where every man had a right to order, passed her comprehension.

Once Madame Lavalette had incidentally made some reference to her relationship with Angelique.

"No, it was not that way," and a heightened color came to Barbe's cheeks. "It was Sylvie's mother,

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though the Du Chatilly's are all of the same strain. My mother died, and we were like sisters after that. She married Captain Perrier, and, though I married, we were never separated. When she died, I went to Brienne with Sylvie; for her brave husband had been killed in battle. And, as the Marquise was ill, I had to take charge."

"Ah, it is on the Du Chatilly side, then?"

"Yes, Madame. And Angelique has the same strain; Gervaise also, though he is nearer, and, after the Sieur Hugh, he is the next heir—if there is any estate left," with a sigh.

Madame Lavalette was secretly pleased that these were all aristocratic people, if they were Huguenots. And, mother-like, she thought of future chances. The fortune left behind in Amsterdam had enlarged, to M. Lavalette's eyes. There was Zenobie, soon to grow up. This pleasantry with Claire meant nothing. Gervaise was too young; and as soon as an eligible *parti* offered himself, that would all be arranged. Girls were trained in those days to respect their parents' wills.

After Madame Henriade had really charmed Barbe by her sweet manner, partaken of some refreshment and a delightful drink that Marti could concoct to perfection, had petted Sylvie, and praised Angelique's needlework, the plan of the little journey was laid before Madame Champe.

The General always gave a large party on his birthday. She had known him years and years; and, while gossip sometimes suggested there was more than friendship in the acquaintance, there was not. She was well satisfied with her own position; as for the General, his had been a sad story, indeed, when wife and children had been lost in one of the slave insurrections in San Domingo. But he was fond of young people, though he

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paid not much attention to young demoiselles; so the choosing of that part of the guests was generally relegated to her, and she performed it satisfactorily.

"For you know," she said, with her soft, melodious laugh, "the young men cannot smoke and talk and shoot, all the time. Our young men are passionately fond of dancing with pretty girls. Indeed, I shall never outgrow the taste myself; and it would be a strange girl, indeed, whose feet did not answer in little pats to the inspiring notes. Madame Lavalette will give your niece a mother's watchfulness; she has a charming daughter of her own. And I beg of you to accept this invitation for her. It will be three days, and she will see so much. They will be full of delight. The General will admire her; I can answer for that. My dear," to Angelique, "he is one of the most charming and fatherly of old men. It is a great pity he has not sons, whose wives could share the glory of his beautiful home."

Angelique Saucier felt delighted, and, perhaps, a little flattered by Madame's manner. She had not expected to be invited when Gervaise had made no suggestion of it; then, she had only seen Madame once. There was a vague little hope that Madame Lavalette might have something to say about it. But this was very complimentary. Madame would not have committed such an overt breach as sending her message second-hand.

"Thank you, Madame," and Angelique rose and made her graceful courtesy. Then she glanced at Barbe, who took her cue at once.

"Thank you, Madame, for the honor and favor. And, if Madame Lavalette does not consider it too much trouble—Angelique, you would like to go? And there will be Gervaise."

"I should like it above all things," said the girl, in her pretty, modest fashion.

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"Then, I may announce to Madame Lavalette. I must go at once. You have been so agreeable I hardly knew how the time was passing. M'sieu Aubreton, will it please you to escort me thither? I am old enough now to confess to a fondness for young men."

Gervaise was delighted, and rose with his best bow.

Madame made a charmed atmosphere about herself that lingered like the fragrance of some flowers.

"She is very lovely," confessed Angelique, with a sigh; though why she sighed she could not have told. Youth has so many satisfactions of its own that it seldom really envies, unless deprived of some delight it strongly covets; and it would not often change with middle life.

Gervaise attended Madame; and while she planned with Madame Lavalette, Gervaise sauntered to the end of the veranda and talked to Claire, who now and then raised her eyes with a beguiling light that brought a curious heat to the young man's cheeks, and a quiver to his pulse.

"You will like to go?"

Her voice was soft—more of assurance than inquiry.

"Oh, yes. I have just looked at the beautiful lake. It is like a sea. And such banks of verdure! I shall be delighted."

"Sailing parties often go out—rowing parties—but, then the slaves are *de trop*, and if the young men row——"

"What then?" smiling out of amused eyes.

"Oh, they cannot play the guitar. And music is so enchanting on the water. The lake is lovely. The river—ah, bah!" with a gesture of disdain.

"But there are little streams, and nooks about. I used to be very fond of rowing. And, at twilight——"

"Do not attempt it," she interrupted, quickly. "Take

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the day. There are so many winds and turns in the bayous; and, if the fog comes up—oh, it is terrible!”

Her face was so full of solicitude that he could almost fancy himself lost in the marsh-fog.

“I should not go alone. De Longpré and I were talking about it. And a journey up to the Indian encampment.”

“They are friendly now, but—do not trust them too far. They have been very cruel.”

“But I have a real journey to make; and I shall doubtless meet some of them. I ought to do that instead of pleasuring.”

“Nay, take the pleasure first.”

Her charming smile would have lured even an older man to the pleasure.

“That is what I mean to do. But the other is a duty; and leads to the settlement of some perplexity. My cousin, Hugh de Brienne, is a fine fellow. I adored him when I was a little boy. He had his head full of adventures. He wanted to go and fight, but poor Captain Perrier was killed. And then he came to Canada, promising to be back in five years.”

“And is it five years?” with sweetest accent.

“Not quite. And here I am, idling away my time when I should be searching for him.”

“You will return?”

She looked as if she might care a great deal.

“Oh, of course. I do not believe I shall find another place so enchanting. I do not wonder people are bewitched with this new land.”

Madame Henriade had despatched her business, and she rose. Gervaise wished there had been more of it. It was so fascinating to watch Mam’selle’s slim, pink

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fingers wind in and out of the embroidery—to get a little tangled in the silk—then to drop her needle while she gave some sort of twist to the thread.

He rose reluctantly. It was in his eyes.

“Thou wilt carry my compliments to Madame Champe and thy sister. Tell them not to feel amazed. I will come and plan for them. And Claire will be very happy to have a companion, since this is her first time at the birthday of the General.”

Gervaise replied with some fervor to his hostess. Being a young man had an indescribable charm.

“But,” said Barbe, when the arrangements had been laid before her, “there is always something. The time goes by so fast. And there is that journey. Is there no way you can hear? You must go?”

“Oh, Barbe, that I might be divided in two bodies! One should take the search, and the other remain here.”

“It is hard to spare thee.” Barbe was much moved. He and Angelique were so charming together and learned so many romantic stories about the province, that it was a delight to listen to. And she felt Angelique was safer, with Gervaise to watch over her. But there was the promise to the dying woman.

As for Sylvie, no day was hardly long enough; only she was always so tired and sleepy when night came. Viny was a devoted attendant, and had a fund of marvellous stories; though, she had been strictly forbidden to tell her anything frightful or sad. But she was young, and lighthearted, and made imaginary dialogues between the birds and the animals. M. Lavalette had sent her a pair of beautiful herons, and Father Antoine, whose acquaintance Jaques guarded most carefully, brought her a tame crane that was as amusing as Pitipat, but not as

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handsome. Every few days, she went down to see Madame Milhet, and the heron ran to meet her as soon as he heard her voice.

"Madame will be for giving it away to Sylvie, next," said Laure, with some discontent. "She has everything."

"Then she will not need Pitipat. Besides, he is mine," returned Dolomine. "I have trained him, and he is fond of me. I mended his leg, when the dogs would soon have killed him. Yes, Mam'selle has plenty."

"And I like Pitipat. I haven't much, and I have no people of my own."

"Don't wish for them, child, unless they could be a credit to you." Mini's tone was lofty.

"And people to love you——"

The hunger in the heart welled up now and then. If she had half hoped Sylvie would like her very much she had found her mistake. But, then Zenobie would not love Sylvie; that was some consolation.

"I just do want to see that little French girl," Hortense de Longpré had said, enthusiastically. "Henri raves about her golden hair and her wonderful complexion, and her grace; but, he admits she is a spoiled child, with a queer bit of temper."

"She comes down to us, occasionally," commented Laure, in an extremely indifferent tone.

"And is her hair golden? Henri thinks some artist ought to paint it. It will grow darker, you know."

"Oh, will it?" That was a comfort, though Laure did not just know why.

"And if you could ask me, sometime when you knew she would come——"

The tone was persuasive—almost entreating.

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"But I never know just when she will come."

Laure's manner was rather stiff. Would Hortense come to see *her*? Why should she add another triumph to Sylvie Perrier?

"Isn't she likely to attend school?"

"They're not Catholics. They despise convents."

"But Henri declares they are charming."

There was no reply to this.

"What a disagreeable little thing Laure Gorgas is!" declared Hortense to Zenobie. "She's proud enough to know those new French people, but she means to keep them to herself. Do they go there very much? They lodged at Mère Milhet's at first, but now they have a house of their own."

"One of papa's houses. Claire and the young lady are great friends."

"And the little sister——"

"She isn't a sister to any of them. They are all cousins. She's not much more than a baby. Such a queer, untrained thing."

"Oh, yes, she's quite a large girl."

Zenobie shrugged her shoulders "Do you know your catechism? You are always missing it. What you will do——"

"I'll have it by Easter; that will answer. I can say every word in French. This detestable Spanish!"

That evening she found Henri sauntering up and down the oleander walk, smoking a cigar.

"Henri," she cried, "couldn't you take me for a walk as far as—as that pretty Mademoiselle Angelique's? I want to see the little girl that you think has such beautiful hair."

Henri was in a very good humor. Then, too, there was a fine excuse to see Mam'selle again.

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"Why, if you will go now. To-morrow, I shall be busy. And we are going to Belle Vue so soon. Run and ask Aunt——"

"She has gone down to the Plaza. Oh, she won't mind, since I am with you. And it needn't be a real call, you know. We might find them somewhere about——"

He laughed. "Yes, come along. But, she's only a little girl; not like you and Zenobie."

"Do you suppose it is true that they have no end of diamonds and things?"

"They sold some diamonds after they came here. In France, I suppose, they were quite grand people."

"With a title!" There was a proud emphasis.

"If titles amount to anything. But that is the cousin's, who is not here. He's a fine fellow—that Gervaise Aubreton. They are all very nice."

Hortense was delighted to gain her point so easily; for she was quite sure her Aunt Melanie, who was a very precise person, would have said: "My child, some day, when I pay my call upon them, you shall go with me," and that time might not come in a year. She was very bright and amiable as they walked along. This was not at all like the settled part of the city, where one might be jostled about by rude persons. They met others strolling for pleasure. Henri knew some of the people and bowed, or exchanged greetings.

And, as good-fortune would have it, Gervaise and his two cousins, and the crane, were walking down the road, bordered with tall palmettos with plummy foliage, that nodded like great flocks of birds, making troops of shadowy figures in the moonlight.

"Ah!" the young people said. "We were out strolling; the night is so divine. Mam'selle Saucier has overcome her fear of Indians, and there are no free blacks roaming

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about; so we take a little indulgence now and then. And Sylvie was quite sure a walk in the cool air would benefit the crane, though I fancy he would rather be at home, nodding on one foot."

"This is my sister, Mam'selle Hortense, who has expressed—what shall I call it?—a complimentary, or a reprehensible, curiosity to see Mam'selle Sylvie."

"Oh," said Sylvie, coming out in the light, half bashfully. Yes, Hortense *was* a big girl.

"Laure Gorgas talked so much about you." She was too well-bred to mention that her brother had done the same thing. "Oh, what an odd pet! What do you call him?"

"His name was Telano. Viny doesn't like it. It sounds as if you meant to say 'Tell all you know,' which is gossipy, Aunt Barbe says."

"And who is Viny?"

"She's the waitress; but she's only hired. And she takes me out and watches me. Telano had half a mind not to like her at first, but he doesn't mind now."

"What did you want to call him?"

"Oh, we tried on ever so many names. You see, the worst was they were all strange to him. And it would be queer to call him 'Tel.'"

"And 'Telly' would be quite ridiculous."

"He looks so kind of wise, and dignified. I'm not sure but Telano suits him. I had a playmate at Dessiers, and he was named Philippe."

"I like Telano better," said Hortense.

"And I have two beautiful blue herons, and some doves; and a squirrel comes and lets me talk to him. Madame Lavalette sent us a splendid cat, but he doesn't want you to touch him. And he spends most of his time catching mice."

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"Then, he understands his business." Hortense laughed merrily.

"And it seems cruel, too. But Marti said we should be overrun with them. And Gervaise has a great, wonderful hound, who looks as if he could talk. He only came yesterday. What have you?"

"Oh, almost everything. A dozen dogs, I believe; papa is so fond of them; and birds and fowls and swans, and a great pond. It comes from the river. The ducks and geese swim about, too. The plantation runs down to the river's edge. We have a boat; but the river is so often muddy. Down town, it is dreadful."

"Yes, I have only seen it once since we landed. And there are such crowds of boats and people."

"Did you like France?"

"I didn't know only Brienne and Dessiers. There are more beautiful flowers here. And I don't like the smell of the ocean—and the pirates—and I am never going back."

"Oh, that is nice. We like people to stay here who are worth having."

"But, in the end, I am going to be an American."

"Then, you will have to go away."

"Yes," she answered, composedly.

"But when you get to liking the people, you will not want to go away," tentatively.

Sylvie looked up, out of her beautiful eyes.

"I like them already," she made answer. "Everybody, I think——" then she flushed. She did not like Félice; she did not mean to like Zenobie. But there were all the woods and the birds and the wonderful skies, and the ringing of the vesper bell. It couldn't matter, then, if you did not like a few things, when there were so many

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you adored. "And I like—America. It has such a grand and strong sound."

"America is all the continent."

"Well, then, I like it all," laughing.

How very pretty she was—like an angel with all that light hair floating about her, in the mystery of the moon-light!

"Oh, I like you! You are so sweet, so lovely." Hortense clasped her in her arms, and kissed her with Southern fervor. Sylvie looked rather amazed at the sudden avowal and the caress.

"I'm so much older. But, I wish you were my sister; and I've never had a sister. Mamma died when I was a little thing. We have some cousins out on Bayou Têche; but they are young ladies, and really don't like girls. When they visit us, they are always saying: 'Run away, Hortense; we want to talk.' Does your cousin send you away, and do you love her?"

"Why—yes. Why should she send me away?" in amaze.

"You are a darling! But if I lived with you, I should be jealous!"

Hortense laughed with a quick gleefulness, as if the thought amused herself.

"Oh, where is Telano?" Sylvie paused suddenly and looked around. "Let us go back," and she dashed away.

The two young men had been body-guards of Angelique, and were deeply interested in the coming visit. They did not hear the interruption.

Sylvie found poor Telano taking a nap by the roadside. She caught him up, with exclamations of endearment. But it was an awkward burden for her small arms, and at first Telano protested.

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"Gervaise! Gervaise!" the child called, and, after several summonses, they wheeled around.

"What has happened to the children?" cried Angelique.

"Oh, Gervaise, will you carry poor Telano home? He is so tired and sleepy. He had to stop and take a nap. And I can't manage him."

They all laughed heartily at that.

"The little Mam'selle owns you," commented Henri, gayly. "Little one, some day we hope your devotion will be given to something better than a crane."

"I love him; and he loves me," returned Sylvie, gravely.

"An indisputable argument."

"Oh, we must turn back," cried Angelique. "They may be worried about us. Mam'selle de Longpré, your brother must bring you up to see us." Could she really ask the girl's friendship for a child like Sylvie?

"I shall be delighted to come. And, Henri, Tante Melanie must do herself the honor of calling upon the ladies. It has been a delightful walk. Good-night, Sylvie, and do not forget me. Try to like me a little, for I shall be very fond of you."

"Yes, I like you already," but there was too much placidness in it to satisfy the vehement Hortense.

CHAPTER X.

A DREAM OF BEAUTY.

THE house at Belle Vue covered a large space of ground, though it was but two stories high. Three owners had taken a hand in it: one in building, when

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some of the material had been brought over the sea; the other two, in adding to it. It stood on a little eminence, and sloped down to the beautiful lake. Part of it was plaster of a dull gray white; there was some stone and brick and one wing in timber. There was an interior court that the irregular sides enclosed, and the wide stone entrance gave a fine view of this. There were arches along the hall, supported by pillars, opening into spacious rooms, while the hall itself was quite magnificent with some old-time carving. Some of the rooms were panelled almost to the top, and the ceiling painted in fresco. There were strange carvings of fauns and satrys, of fruit and foliage; great magnolia blooms, pomegranates, grapes that seemed like plums, and small clusters, not larger than a pea—all packed together, but hanging gracefully; and, here and there, lilies, wide-open, or drooping from very heaviness.

But the vista at the end of the hall gave all this an aspect of weird richness and gloom. There was the real garden. Far in the background were immense single trees, standing like sentinels; and if Art had arranged the rest, it was the most exquisite art, for it seemed as if every gradation of greenness was blended, like some choice embroidery. From dense dark shades and great, strange tropical leaves to exquisite lightness, airiness, daintiness—as of a young girl amid veterans of a century. And, oh, the gorgeous bloom, the entrancing sweetness!

The stone steps were almost as wide as the hall; quite free in front, except for a cluster of three columns on each side, but the ends were enclosed in a mass of vines. There was a gently sloping stretch toward the lake, part of which had been rescued from it, and protected by a wall. Up at one end was a wharf, a boat-

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house, a long line of sheds that betokened business, and craft of several kinds, besides one or two evidently meant for pleasure, newly painted and rigged.

Madame Henriade's party had taken it leisurely in the morning. There were two young girls besides Claire and Angelique, who had their own careful chaperons, with Gervaise and De Longpré, for attendants, Lalande and Marie Abeille; and several young men, with direct invitations from the General.

"How lovely it all is!" began Angelique. "It is fairyland. I feel as if I could do nothing but look, and look. I never imagined anything like it."

"Then it compares with Brienne?" smilingly remarked Madame Lavalette.

"Oh, Brienne is gloomy beside this. The woods are grand, to be sure; but the house is old, and so much of it stone, that it is often damp and cold. I like the lightness, the beauty—the something that is like youth, Madame," and a tender light came into her eyes. "Oh, I do not wonder they call it the New World. It should be a splendid New France, where everything is fresh and fair, and might be made glorious."

"You are an enthusiast," but there was approval in the tone and in the smiling eyes.

She expressed her delight later to Madame Henriade.

"You would do well to undertake new countries," said that lady. "Think of courageous Madame Cadillac, leaving the home of her girlhood, and helping and encouraging her husband in the founding of new towns, and sharing his hardships and dangers! And that brave little wife of De Tonti—the explorer of the iron hand, as he was called, having lost one in battle, and taking this for a repairment. No doubt many men found it the iron

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hand in the velvet glove; though gloves were made of deer-skins in those days. And how they came down to New Orleans to search for La Salle, whom they both loved! There were many courageous women of whom the world will never hear."

"But why do they not put them in books, as in old France? There were books in the library at Brienne that were my delight."

"Ah, child, the explorers are too busy making history. They have no time to write it."

"But the priests——"

"Well, the priests here have little leisure. They are trying to convert and civilize the Indians. And they all have to earn their bread, and teach other people how to earn theirs. It is not like Europe, with its endowed convents, and its centuries of civilization."

Angelique suppressed a little shiver. She had been trained to fear and abhor them. But already she had come to admire hard-working Father Antoine, who was at his labors early, and his prayers late, and who seemed most gentle and kindly.

"We shall have histories enough presently, never fear. When life gets a little more settled, for the romances go on all the time. When you are an old woman you will have a rich store to relate to your grandchildren. But now, you must live them," studying the fair girl with interest.

"And it is such an enchanting thing to live! Oh, Madame, I feel sometimes as if I never wanted to die," and the luminous eyes overflowed with enthusiasm.

It would be a sad thing to want to die in youth, and quite unnatural."

The house went on filling up. The ladies had the wing

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one side of the hall, on the upper floor, the gentlemen the other; and there was much gay chattering and laughter.

Angelique thought General Villaineuve the most magnificent man she had ever seen. Tall and splendidly developed, with but few of the signs of age, except in his snowy hair, which was still abundant, and his beautiful long beard, that was Pablo's great delight to dress and perfume. A strong yet refined face, with black eyes shining genially in a pleasant atmosphere that diffused a sense of reliance and sympathy, yet that could peer deeply into other eyes and souls, when so minded, and wrest secrets from them unwittingly.

Late in the afternoon they all viewed the plantations, though not their extent. Miles of sugar-cane—now that the genius of M. Boré had made it profitable. And there was a rumor stirring cotton-planters that some enterprising genius was studying cheaper and quicker ways of separating cotton from the seed; and this would largely increase the profit. Long rows of slave cabins, some with tiny little gardens; swarms of laughing, rollicking children, babies tumbling about, rolling up the luminous whites of their eyes; and, afar, a curious sing-song, the like of which Angelique had never heard. It came from the woods, but it was neither the trees nor the wind.

Claire interrupted the questioning expression.

"It is the slaves coming home from the fields, singing."

"It is really beautiful."

"And, to-morrow night, the General is going to let them have a dance of their own. That will be worth seeing. Most of the big dances have been forbidden—they get so wild and unmanageable—but on one's own plantation one is responsible. I once saw an Indian dance on the

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encampment up above us. How curious that savage people put so much power in their dances!"

Gervaise and Henri were coming toward them with a stranger, a young man, but older than they were, with a fine, martial air—a compact lithe figure, and a face to impress one. Not on account of striking beauty, Henri was much handsomer. A face strong and fair, with the sort of complexion on which sun and wind leave small traces; a broad forehead, rather dark, decisive eyebrows that gave a world of resolution to the face; blue eyes—with a smile in them now—though they could frown and look stormy enough on occasion. The mouth was firm, yet smiling; the chin, rather square. And, as if to emphasize a more northern clime, his hair was quite light—a sort of golden brown.

Henri was the master of ceremonies.

"My friend wished to come, and Madame Henriade gave me permission to present him," bowing to both parties. And Mr. Roger Norton was thus made acquainted with the young ladies, who accepted him rather shyly, as well-bred demoiselles were expected to do. But he appeared in no wise abashed, and had a fund of ready talk. He had come from the middle region, of which so little seemed really known then, though all manner of wild stories were afloat; and it was now going through a stirring romance, with the ambitious dreams of a grand middle kingdom or empire. Probably no one just knew. There were several parties cherishing separate projects. Perhaps the safety to the union lay in the fact that, at the bottom, it was each party for itself.

They paired off as they walked around to the imposing front. A delightful-looking company were assembled on the broad veranda, chatting, laughing—an admiring cir-

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cle of gentlemen, whose pleasure was visible in their faces.

"It is like a big hotel," said Norton, glancing them over. "Only, every one seems charmed. There is no dissatisfaction. You Southern people have some secret—some fascinating atmosphere. Is it the French temperament?"

"I am new to it all," returned Angelique. "We have not been here long. It is a beautiful sight. I have had two brief visits to Paris, but I was not really *in* anything. I saw the King and Queen driving out in state, and the Guards; but the people were not enthusiastic. It seemed cold and stiff."

"Ah, you are——"

"Emigrants. Yes, Monsieur," she answered, tranquilly. "We have only been here a short time."

"Well, you are in good company, if royalty may be considered such. The Duke of Orleans and his two brothers came in just as I left the city. Are you interested in this new ruler of France, the new order of things, or are you still an aristocrat?"

His tone was so clear and soft, his eyes wore a sort of persuasive light, as if he could draw the confidence out of any one, with no wounded feeling or sting left behind.

"I do not know, Monsieur. For two years we lived very quietly. The Marquise de Brienne was in ill-health, and died. Her son, a relative of all who are left, was here in America. It was thought best to come hither. We went to Holland, and were a long time on our journey. The poor King and Queen have gone; and we have heard only such a little."

"This grand soldier—this man who has come up from an unknown family, and who has pluck and courage, and farsightedness and determination—is First Consul of the French Republic. You know all that?"

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"Yes. Gervaise, my cousin, hears. We live very retired. We are not rich any more."

How charming her confidence was! And how lovely she appeared in her simplicity!

"The man may make himself the great hero of the age. Time will show whether he has the requisite virtue, the high aims, the singleness of purpose, the good of his fellow-men at heart; or whether self-aggrandizement will conquer him. But he is a great soldier, as I said. And a curious strain of liberty is in the air," smiling, and nodding as if to some inner thought.

She smiled also. She knew nothing of the great struggles—of the rights and wrongs.

"And you have been nowhere but in New Orleans?"

"No, Monsieur."

"Ah, you should see the eastern side of the country—the other cities, New York, Boston——"

"We were to go to New York," she said, in the pause.

"Ah—and you drifted hither? Well, I can tell you you will like it better than either of those cities, because it is French. No other place at all resembles it. They bear the earmarks."

"As what?" She gave him a perplexed smile. She still held a secret interest in New York.

"That city has the impress of the Dutch and the English. It will outgrow it in time."

"We were in Amsterdam. I think the Dutch are picturesque and—and clean, and kindly."

"And Boston is still full of Puritanism. They came over to be able to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, but they still want to fit everybody to it. A Procrustean bed."

"Ah, yes, Monsieur," and a soft light went over her face like a smile, that showed she understood. "That is not all the great cities?"

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"Philadelphia is next. I think you might like that. The people are softened down; there are many Quakers, and no one quarrels about religion. Then Baltimore—that is Catholic. And Charleston. They are different—Southern. They have lovely old houses, and heirlooms of which they are immensely proud. They are more suave, more generously hospitable."

"Which should you choose, Monsieur?" looking up brightly.

"I don't know. I'm not ready to settle. I like adventures," laughing. "There is much of the country to discover—no one knows all that is west of the Mississippi River."

She thought he looked like the descriptions of some of the old explorers. He was so strong and joyous and daring.

Madame Lavalette beckoned to them. Claire was well enough, talking to Gervaise and Henri, but this strange person——

"Come, Angelique," exclaimed Claire.

"You have been very entertaining, Monsieur," she said, as if to soften her abrupt departure.

Norton went over to the group of men, and his reception stayed the little rebuke Madame Lavalette had ready. But mothers and chaperons were careful of their treasures.

The ladies dined by themselves, but soon after the younger guests joined them. The elders had weighty affairs to discuss, and preferred to do their smoking and talking by themselves.

The young men brought out their best powers of entertainment. Many played on the guitar, and sang delightfully in both French and Spanish. Ladies clapped their hands in a delicate fashion, to applaud.

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The General appeared presently. "The hall was ready for dancing," he announced, and the sound of scraping fiddles verified it. Bright eyes were lustrous with pleasure. Young fellows bowed in the most entreating manner to chaperons. And in a few moments the great hall was a moving, floating mass. The soft light of innumerable candles, the graceful flutter of fans in the pauses, smiles and captivating glances, and clouds of diaphanous white; whirling, gliding waltzers—everything orderly, but full of bewitchment for the small feet treading the measures.

There were some card-tables, but many preferred to promenade through the arches and gossip charmingly with the elder men who had come to look on, and, perhaps, take part. Madame Henriade was as great a favorite as any of the girls.

"I am not quite sure about your ways," said Roger Norton to Madame, "and I am afraid to blunder. Whom shall I ask for the pleasure of Mam'selle Saucier's hand for one dance?"

"Ah—Madame Lavalette. Come with me. I thought you were meaning to save your finest steps for the great ball to-morrow night."

"I am not a very rabid dancer," laughingly.

Claire was full of gratification. She had been up every time, and, more than once, could have had two partners. Angelique had hesitated a little, and was almost afraid at first; she was so unused to gayety, though she and Gervaise often danced by the half-hours.

"Monsieur Norton begs for the favor of Mam'selle Angelique," Madame Henriade said, in presenting him.

That was voucher enough, and the chaperon smiled acquiescently.

Norton had not the exquisite grace of the Creole, but

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he danced well. He was so tall and strong that Angélique seemed to float, with the delicate guidance. And when the music made the little final pause, she glanced up so wistfully he fancied there was regret in her eyes.

"You knew a Captain Strong of the Mary Ann?" he asked, rather abruptly, as he loitered by the window with her.

"Oh, yes; we—we were deeply indebted to him for much kindness," she said, quietly.

"I have heard the story—from him. I had a curious impression that I had seen you somewhere before—the names were so familiar. It was his description. And there is another one—your sister?"

"No, a cousin. How strange!" She looked up with a soft light in her eyes that was quite enchanting; certainly she was pleased.

"So we have a mutual friend—a grand, good fellow! He will be in next week. I shall see him."

"Oh, I hope we may also," she said, with a quick flush of pleasure.

How lovely she was! Ah, he had it, now. He would not trouble or embarrass her; he would make the captain present him to the household, and vouch for him. He was not accustomed to these Southern restrictions that hedged girls about. And he could improve the two days by making friends with the Cousin Gervaise Aubreton.

That evening was only a preliminary. Everybody woke the next morning to find flags flying from the roof of the old house, from the boats; and even the negro quarters were decorated. As he looked General Villaineuve wondered if the Spanish flag would be flying on his next birthday. There were many things in the air—plans discussed last night. If one only knew whom to trust!

The soft peal of the chapel bell sounded tenderly on

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the air, and sent faint, quivering echoes over the beautiful lake. Nearly everybody trooped to mass, and all connected in any way with the General breathed heartfelt thanks for his life, and prayers for the future. On the return, he was congratulated warmly by his guests, his neighbors, and a deputation from the slaves, headed by a tall, fine-looking man, greatly above the average of his compeers, and who carried himself with so much dignity it seemed quite impossible to Angelique that he should be a slave.

Anniversaries at that era had not been degraded by profuse gift-giving. Good wishes, perhaps a few verses by some one poetically inclined, though New Orleans had not as yet poured out her beautiful soul in poetry. All nature spoke for her instead, in the delicious voice of beauty.

Now the near-by guests thronged in. Boats of every kind were out on the lake. Gayety, pleasure, music; chatting with old and young—everybody given to the utmost joyousness. All the negro quarters alive with gladness as well; for Master's birthday was the big holiday of the year, and the occasion of much indulgence.

And then, such a dinner! One room, large as it was, could not contain them all; so the banquet was in the big hall, with either end opening on a picture such as nature alone can display. And, though later in the evening there might be excesses in some of the private rooms with the older men, there was too much regard paid to the ladies, as well as to the host, to admit of any breach.

The slaves were to have their merry-making early in the evening. At nine, they were all to be housed in their cabins, and the lights out, except those occupied about the house. At the quarters there were gay lanterns, and

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at points where there could be no possible danger pitch pine-knots blazed.

Their dancing was weird and curious; with no settled plan, it seemed—everybody being partners for a while, in whirls, slow, measured movements, circling round, marching, flying off with much swaying of the body, flinging out the arms, and then indulging in steps of the most wonderful kind, though mostly with a fascinating grace. Some of it had been borrowed from the Indian dances.

After this, jigs and reels and waltzes. When the excitement ran too high the ringleaders were marched off; and a sudden restraint fell upon the remainder, though there was much merriment and laughter. The big old clock began its strokes—slow, ponderous; and, though the pleasure-lovers were loath to give up, they had learned that future indulgences depended largely on present behavior, and that the kindly hand, so ready to distribute favors, was quite as swift to punish any derelictions from the rules, which were really not severe. The General was idolized by all his household.

But at the big house there was no need for supervision, except what the mothers and chaperons exercised. Girls were trained to habits of obedience, as well as the slaves; and the tenderness in families was one of the most charming features of the day. Sons had the old French reverence and affection for their parents, even if they went astray in many other respects; and were less intellectual than at the East.

Angelique enjoyed all with the zest of youth and freshness. The charming politeness, the dainty elegance of compliment; the exquisite deference was very fascinating, and held what she imagined was the air of courts, that she had heard of, but never seen. True, there were a few exceptions. The Americans were more brusque,

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and not so gallant. Yet there was something in the frankness of Roger Norton that appealed to her strongly, that gave her an impression that he might be depended on to the uttermost. He had a taste for, and an understanding of beauty, that stirred her to a greater comprehension of it.

"Come out here and look at this picture," he said, when the air had grown stifling within, and the dancers were languid.

It was long past midnight. In the east, the stars had begun to pale. The lake widened out in the darkest blue—almost black; the sky above was light and delicate in tint; and some few stars were extraordinarily brilliant, in strong contrast to the others. Down along one side, in the great curve, stood the lofty cypresses stretching out phantom arms, the oaks, with wide spreading branches and long pendants of clinging moss, whose pale gray made a light between the darker green. Magnolias, palms; strange shapes dimly outlined and losing themselves in vague shadow—as if they had reached the end of the world, and there was nothing beyond.

"What a time for a float out on the lake!" he said. "Would it take one to an enchanted land, I wonder?"

The girl stood motionless at his side, and made no reply. She was awe-struck with the all-pervading loveliness.

And he wondered what there was about her that should make such an impression on him—an impression he did not care to resist, it was so delightful. Not the mere beauty, but the unconscious sweetness she seemed to diffuse with every movement, as a flower shakes off perfume.

There was one more delightful morning. The sun was veiled a little by drifting clouds, and most of the

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party were out in the boats. How lovely and tranquil it was! The air was fragrant with perfumed moisture; the coves and nooks led to enchanted caves; the great waving trees sent dancing shadows over the clear water that took its tint from them. Great masses of bloom broke the greenness by their brilliancy; fish darted about, giving a phosphorescent light; birds flung a swift dazzle in and out, or great flocks flew over, slowly it seemed, beating the air languidly with their wings. Some of the party chattered gayly; two young men, with voices that might have made a fortune in modern times, sang songs.

Angelique could not talk—hardly listen. Her wildest dreams had never pictured a scene like this. All through her being she was strangely moved, and the mystery was one of uncomprehended sweetness. She could feel the blue eyes of Norton upon her—not boldly, but from under the golden-brown lashes. Was it because they were blue? Would she have resented any darker eyes?

“Oh, Madame Henriade,” she said, at parting. “I know not how to thank you! I have been in an enchanted land.”

Madame smiled. Though she was not considering lovers for herself, she often did for young people. This pretty, simple-hearted girl must marry in her youth and freshness. Already she had chosen her a husband; but it was not Roger Norton. These adventurous Americans with no settled homes or land she looked upon as the *Courier des bois* of a century ago.

And, indeed, the wild spirit of adventure had not died out. There were still plots and schemes. One that looked tempting, to many eyes, was the scheme of a grand new Empire or Republic, in the choicest heart of the country. The middle colonies were already dissatisfied with the little attention paid them by the central govern-

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ment. Spain hampered them in the way of trade, and her foothold was uncertain. She had never gained the esteem of the French. Here was this magnificent territory from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and stretching out west farther than man had explored, taking in both sides of the mighty river and its tributaries. No wonder the dream fascinated, and that, only a few years later, a man whose disappointment at missing the Presidency by one vote should have plotted and schemed on much the same lines, and lost all.

Was Carondelet coquetting with these people on his own plans of self-aggrandizement and power? But the proud, restless Kentuckian, the brave and hardy mountaineer of Tennessee, the adventurers from different quarters, had no idea of turning their heritage over to Spain in the end, though the island of Orleans and the mouths of the Mississippi were their objective point. Was there not room enough in this great America for two republics? For surely the Eastern States did not understand the temper nor the wants of these settlers, who had emigrated from them.

There was also a disquieting feeling about slavery even then. The newer emigrants were not in favor of it. And there was England to strike against, for the war of the Revolution had not settled all things.

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CHAPTER XI.

ROYALTY.

BUT gayety went on. The theatre improved. There were public dances managed on what were considered very respectable lines, where some beautiful Creole, or some woman with a faint admixture of the condemned blood, held an audience transfixed by her wondrous grace and beauty. And cafés attracted visitors in a rather elegant anteroom where gaming-tables were set; or some young man who had gambled away his small patrimony played exquisite airs on the violin or sang songs of love and despair, that in the daytime he might lounge on the Plaza, or promenade the few public streets in immaculate attire.

There were many people of rank, and the sons of the Regent, now out of business, finding but few places of welcome, were received with open arms, and added much to the pleasure of the higher classes.

The Marigny House was brilliant with social pomp. dinners and balls, for the Marquis was a very pronounced Royalist, though a good Catholic. M. de Boré was full of attention and sympathy as well.

"You go everywhere," cried Sylvie, disconsolately. "It is very hard to be a little girl, and to have to stay at home with no one but a crane, who is always wanting to wade in the ponds and catch horrid things, or else go to sleep."

"Why, almost every day you go to walk with Gervaise! And you wouldn't go with me to the Lavalettes'. I saw the queer old *gran'mère*. M'sieu Lavalette brought her down-

stairs in his arms, and she has shrunk so she is not much bigger than you; but she has fiery black eyes, and she talks shrill and fast. Zenobie is her favorite. She is saving a beautiful string of pearls that her husband gave her when they had been married twenty years. And some elegant rings that she wears all the time. They are tied on with a silken thread so she can't lose them."

"I don't like any one so old," said the child, with a pout. "Aunt Barbe is plenty old enough."

"And Zenobie wants to see you. I can't understand why you dislike her. I think her quite as nice as Hortense."

"But Hortense loves me."

"Zenobie might, if you gave her a chance."

"I don't want her to," with some petulance.

"You are a disagreeable little girl. And you can be so sweet."

Angelique was making yards and yards of sheer ruffling for her pretty gown she was to wear at the Marigny House, where the Duke of Orleans held quite a little court; and to be presented to him was considered something of a favor. Madame Henriade had taken her protégée about with much kindness and pleasure. True, she always met the young Spaniard, Manuel Torres, who was charmingly polite, but now and then said such extravagant things that it brought the color to her cheeks.

Sylvie kicked the leg of the table with her tiny slipper, and looked through at the garden. Telano was catching flies with his long bill. He did it very adroitly—she thought quite as well as the toads. Down below, the herons were chattering. There was a pond Jaques had dug out and widened the little stream, and made a rustic seat where Sylvie could watch them.

"I wish you'd read Spanish with me."

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"I can't, just now. But stay," as the child's face fell, "I'll get my book, and listen as you read."

"Gervaise never teaches me any more," she said, in a pitiful voice of complaint.

That was part of the disquiet. Gervaise had found an errand to take him up to the Lavalettes'. Claire had a great charm for the young man. And Sylvie did not outgrow her jealousy. What would be done with the troublesome little thing by and by?

"I'd rather have French verses," Sylvie began, perversely. "Or, you might sing me a song."

A spoiled child, sure enough.

"This was what they sang on the lake. I thought it very sweet."

In a soft, gay voice she sang a merry chanson.

"And now, tell me about the house again. Do you ever suppose there will be a birthday when I can go? It is very hard to be a little girl."

"But I was little once," laughingly.

"And if I had a beautiful big doll I shouldn't mind so much. Were there no little girls in the General's house?"

"Not any. Little girls do not go to parties. Why, I never went to a party until Madame Henriade asked me."

"But they have *festas* at the convent. And processions, when you are dressed in your finest, and everything! And little cakes to eat."

"Perhaps you had better go to the convent."

"But I don't like so many prayers, and, then, the penances. And to go alone in the chapel and kneel there! Suppose some horrible great thing like a crocodile should come in?"

"The crocodile doesn't like to leave the water."

"Well, a great wolf, then!"

"Or a mouse," laughed Angelique.

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Telano came stalking up to the steps, and uttered his lonely cry; and his little mistress ran out to him, and was soon as gay as a bird.

The Marigny House was in its glory that winter. The Marquis Marigny de Mandeville was a gracious gentleman, elegant, generous and witty, and, with M. de Boré, made the lives of the young Princes a round of amusement and pleasure. And at Pointe Coupée, the house of M. Poydras, they were not only made welcome, but generously provided for in other ways; though the home was simple and unostentatious, the heart was tender and sympathetic.

But the Marigny House was the scene of the greatest pleasures. And when Madame Henriade had a request to bring some of the prettiest young ladies she knew, she chose Angelique, not only on account of her beauty, but that she, too, had been forced to fly from her native land.

The princes were certainly very affable, and fond of pleasure. Angelique found herself quite an object of attention at once. The Duke of Orleans knew the estate very well, and remembered that young Hugh had passed one winter at court, where he had met him several times.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, it is well you were not there to see the ruin of all things. No words can ever describe its horrors, and it would pain you to remember. What my poor little cousins suffered is incredible! And here is this upstart—because he has won some famous battles—made head of the realm, and rules by might, not by any divine right. Ah, it is a sorry time for us poor exiles. And what has become of the young Marquis?"

Angelique explained that he had come to America, where present traces had been lost. Monsieur Aubreton had written, but, so far, no word of any kind had reached them. Her cousin had resolved to go in search of him.

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When she danced with the Duke she little thought that at some future day she should be received as one of the ladies of the American embassy, and the Duke of Orleans be on the throne of France, while the grand Emperor, who had achieved so much, was, in his turn, an exile, and buried on the rocky isle of St. Helena.

"But I liked the Count of Beaujolais best," said Claire, when they compared notes, as even the demure demoiselles of that period were given to sweet little confidences. "He is so unaffected. I have always thought there would be something imposing about royalty; but, really, one can talk to him as one does to Gervaise."

She called him Gervaise to Angelique, but she said Monsieur in the properest fashion, before her mother.

"And he dances beautifully. But it seems as if every one knew how to dance with grace and ease. Even the Marquis was a picture, as he stepped so lightly, and as for Madame Henriade——"

"Oh, she is delicious. There are girls dying to have her for a patron; and, really, Angelique, we are to be envied."

The Count of Beaujolais endeared himself to many a young girl. And through those weeks Claire sometimes thought—but, after all, the Count was young, and poor, and an exile, and the pure pleasure itself is much to youth. Besides, Claire was a well-brought-up young girl, and she knew some day a husband would be provided for her, whom she would have the right to love.

One evening there came an old friend to the Champe house—good Captain strong—and he brought with him a young American, who was anxious to renew his acquaintance with the two young people he had met at General Villaineuve's. Their romantic story had lingered

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in his mind, and the captain had talked so much about the little one.

The little one was in a charming mood. The captain had brought her some soft, white, silky material for a frock, no end of gay ribbons, and a string of coral—not simple little beads, but round and exquisitely polished, each one held separately by a fine gold wire, and of a pink that seemed melting in its softness.

Angelique felt curiously shy. He thought her very lovely, with her downcast eyes, and the soft color that came and went.

Sylvie prattled entertainingly. He said he would like to see the crane. A crane that could learn to dance and to hold a conversation with one must be very intelligent.

"Of course it isn't real French," she admitted, hesitatingly. "And he cannot make sentences, but he knows so much. I've been trying to tame the herons—I mean, teach them. And now there are some baby herons, and I think the mother is cross."

Telano was as good-natured as his mistress. She sang a little measure, and he stepped off quite gracefully on his long slim legs, while his plummy tail accented every motion. Sylvie kept time with one dainty finger.

Telano marched gravely round in a circle, with a dignified gait, nodding his head as if bowing to some imaginary partner. Afterward, he crossed the circle with a hopping step, on one foot, then on the other, raising his wings. Then he swung himself round, back again, and began the promenade that had opened the exercise, bowing with the utmost gravity.

"Oh, you are a darling!" She ran and hugged him. "Now, what will you have? Here is a pomegranate, but I have no knife."

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"I will cut it for you."

How beautiful it was, with its indescribable color. Norton studied it a moment.

"He likes the seeds. Here, Telano, you have been a very good gentleman. I am obliged to you."

Telano uttered two or three guttural sounds.

"He says you are welcome to his poor performance, Monsieur."

"Why, I thought it excellent."

"Hear that, Telano! Monsieur thinks you are splendid. And Monsieur has seen many things."

She gave him a sudden, rapturous hug. As soon as Telano was free, he broke into a long gabble, looking directly at his mistress; then he made a funny spread of his drooping tail feathers, and flapped his wings.

"How could you train him so well?"

"Oh, I don't know. And he listens, sometimes when I read French verses. I think he likes poetry."

"Are you fond of it?"

"Oh, those delightful little things that have pretty, jingling words at the end. I sometimes make it, myself, to the trees and the birds."

"Then you must be a poet. And what other pets have you?"

"There are some beautiful ducks; but they are such greedy things. They eat and eat, and never once say 'thank you.'"

"That is ingratitude. And what else—a beautiful dog?"

"I don't like dogs. I believe I am afraid of them. M'sieu Jaques has one that watches the house, and is kept on a chain. But he has such fierce eyes. And then, there are squirrels, and the cockatoo, who is beautiful but cross, and wants to snap your fingers. He has wicked

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eyes. Marti brought him here, and he lives in a cage. And the pretty love-birds and the mocking-birds; but I like them best out of doors. There they can talk to each other. I shouldn't like a bird in a cage. I should always feel sorry for him," and she sighed.

Gervaise came out to join them. "Well, did the crane perform satisfactorily," he asked, with a laugh.

"Please call him Telano," she said, with dignity.

"You do not talk English?"

"I am learning a little. It is rather awkward, but I can begin to understand quite well. There are so many languages, down on the levee, that one is struck almost dumb."

"And one thinks it a pity they should have begun the Tower of Babel."

"What was it for?" asked Sylvie.

"Why, once, a long while ago—thousands of years—some people thought they would build a tower to reach up to heaven, so they could go there whenever they liked. Suddenly, a queer thing happened. They all began to talk different languages. So no one could understand what the other one wanted, and they quarrelled; one went one way and one went the other, in small companies that understood each other, and they settled all round the world."

"And the world is very large?" Sylvie said, with a soft sigh. "Have you been to New Amsterdam?"

"New York? The English took it from the Dutch, and then we took it from the English."

"Will any one take it from you?"

"I think not," and he gave a mellow laugh.

"If you could go by land, I should like to go," she remarked, seriously.

"Ah, but you can. It is a sail up the Mississippi, and then the Ohio——"

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"That is not going by land," she interrupted.

"Oh, no. Pardon me. There are many ways of going by land, but they are troublesome and tedious, and often dangerous. We have not conquered all the Indians yet. And a good deal of the journey would have to be made on horseback. I should advise you to go up the Mississippi. That is not like the ocean, and there are no pirates."

"I am to go up to Michigan before long," Gervaise announced.

"If we could agree upon time, I should like to have you for a companion part of the way. Indeed, I have some copper lands that I ought to inquire into. Why, we might take it together."

"That would be most delightful for me." Gervaise's young eyes kindled with sudden joy and relief. I have been dreading to go alone."

"Monsieur Norton," said a soft voice, "Captain Strong is sorry to disturb you, but he wishes to go, as business presses. I hope you have been entertained?"

"I found Mam'selle Sylvie charming, and the crane, remarkable. I hope she will allow me to visit him again," bowing to the child.

"And, Angel, M'sieu Norton may go to Michigan," cried Gervaise. "Isn't that a stroke of good fortune for me?" and his voice was overfreighted with satisfaction.

Angel! Did they call her that? How beautiful it sounded! Could there be a more appropriate name?

"Why that would be most friendly," she replied.

Captain Strong had enjoyed his visit with Madame Barbe very much, and was pleased to find they had been no greater sufferers by their misfortunes.

"It is not that we are at all rich," explained Barbe, "but everybody is so kind and gracious. And the gar-

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dens are so full, the fruit is so delicious. It is like living in the garden of Paradise."

"And you have to look out for the serpents," he returned, a little grimly. "But nature is bountiful here."

"And God made the people kindly. Even now I understand how much worse the pirates might have been."

"Indeed that is so. And I think they grow more daring. There are too many fingers at the pie, pulling out plums; so, no one really guards the poor pie, when they should all join. Still, I have met with no misadventure."

Laure had a gift of a new frock which she displayed with great elation. Then she said:

"Of course the necklace is very pretty, but it is just for ornament, you know. It will be a long while before it is proper for you to wear it. And children's festas are very simple things. Now I can wear my frock on every occasion. A necklace like that would do me no good whatever."

"But I do wear the necklace," said Sylvie, with great dignity. "I wore it to tea at Longpré's, and Hortense thought it lovely."

"Mam'selle Hortense had for her lesson the seven deadly sins. She is very fond of the world—very vain," remarked Laure, with severity.

"But she will not be a nun."

"One can never tell. A most beautiful young lady has entered the novitiate. She was going to be married, and her lover was killed in one of the skirmishes near Mobile. So she gave all her beautiful things to the altar of St. Mary. A great many sad misfortunes happen to people of the world. The convent is the only safe place."

"But I don't believe Hortense will ever enter a convent.

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And we are to go over to the Marigny House, to see the Princes. They know about Brienne, and my cousin Hugh."

That was an unassailable rampart. From that superior height Sylvie could look down on those below her. Laure could have gnashed her teeth, but she put on an air of indifference.

"They have been to the convent, and come to church. They are good Catholics."

Sylvie felt a little bowled over at that.

But she and Hortense had most enjoyable times together. Aunt Melanie had paid her visit. Gervaise had been taken down to the great shipping house by Henri, and proffered employment when he returned, for it would be hardly safe to go back to France. The Republic was a great thing; but no one quite knew what this invincible Bonaparte was aiming at.

The pretty old house, with its walled-in garden, stood for many a year a landmark. Throngs of people came to pay their respects to the affable young men. And the Count of Beaujolais was particularly charming to the young people, and, really, very much smitten by Claire. But these newer French people pleased him very much; Gervaise was so eager and enthusiastic, Angelique so well-bred, and the little girl charming in her frankness.

And then came Christmas Eve, which was a great festival. There had been no winter at all as yet. Trees and flowers were in bloom, and the air was bland and fragrant.

After the service in the church, the streets and the Plaza were thronged. The shops were gay with colored lights; there were booths where everything to eat, and not a few things to wear, were being sold. Pictures of the Virgin and the infant Saviour met one everywhere, and were

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offered to nearly every passer-by. Stout negresses with gay turbans were concocting savory messes on charcoal fires; squaws were thrusting at one bunches of sweet herbs, calamus buds, belts, moccasins, and curious embroidery on birch bark, or beautifully tanned skin; and children were selling flowers gathered from the woods and swamps. Great stems of flaming lilies in gorgeous colors or pure white made one look like part of a procession.

Gervaise found a seat for them. Henri and Hortense were in their party. Behind Angelique stood young Norton, like a sentinel, though he talked most to Sylvie and Hortense. And then the Duke of Montpensier, and his young brother, came along, and paused.

"The gayety makes one feel quite at home," the Duke remarked. "What a fine night, and such a splendid moon! Your river, in its curious tint, looks like a gilded stream. We were hearing the strange and pathetic story of De Soto only a few days ago. What a mighty fund of romance its bosom holds! Ah, you have a marvellous country and a most beautiful province. But it should, indeed, be New France. Am I talking treason? One hardly knows——" with a little uncertainty.

"We are French to the heart's core," said Gervaise, bending over, confidentially.

The American heard that. "What a love of country and undying patriotism of country you Frenchmen keep!" he exclaimed. "For more than thirty years Spain has been trying to quench the national spirit by tolerably fair means. She has not done badly for the colony, when you consider all things. But she has taken no root in the affections of the people. In the eastern colonies the French have assimilated; you find them in the Carolinas. But New Orleans is a French province, and the French-

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speaking people are eager to-day to go back to their first love. But, Monsieur, there is another tide creeping in now that may be more potent."

"And a whisper," said Henri, "that we shall go back to France." His tone was very low, and he studied Norton eagerly.

"This is not a night for hatching plots," interposed the Count, laughingly. "And with such fair demoiselles in company, it is treason to them. This is the little maiden who was so entertained about the queer old articles and legends that our host has collected," and he smiled over to Sylvie.

"I like the stories so much, and the brave men," Sylvie answered. "I wish they could be put in a book."

"You have developed few geniuses yet," remarked the Duke. "New countries have so much else to occupy them. But at Pointe Coupée, our host proved himself not only an excellent musician, but has written an heroic poem on one of your governors who certainly deserves to be remembered. At the time the British prepared to take your town, he inspired the people with immense enthusiasm and turned the tables upon them, as you all know doubtless, and swept the river clear of them, taking their forts from Baton Rouge to the Mobile River. Ah, it is very enthusiastic."

"I should like to see it," and Angelique's eyes kindled.

"We have a few of the French poets——"

There was a diversion just then. The Lavalette party espied them and halted. The young Count went across to Claire's side at once.

"Sylvie, this is Zenobie Lavalette," announced Hortense, with an accent of mirth and mischief in her tone, enjoying her opportunity.

And Zenobie, who had been full of gayety for the last

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half-hour, could not, in a moment, be sour and disagreeable as she faced the charming little girl.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS AND A LOVER.

How sweetly the bells rang out on Christmas morning! The listeners might not have taken in the full import of the "Good will and peace," yet there were bright and glad hearts among those who hurried to mass. For introspection and doubt of the truth had not come in as yet, and there was a childish faith—an unconquerable faith, serene and satisfying. Cordial greetings were exchanged; there were gifts of flowers to each other—and good wishes. They were all merry, and felt they had a right to be.

For every service there was a new summons, sounding softly on the peerless air. In some of the Eastern cities they would have called it summer.

"Are you going to Church?" asked Sylvie, in surprise, as Angelique seemed preparing for a walk at least.

"Yes, Gervaise and I. Claire begged us to. It will be an unusual service—they all think it so beautiful. The nuns will sing behind the screen."

"Do you mean to be a Catholic?" asked Sylvie, apprehensively.

"No, dear. But Claire is, and I like her very much. And I am going to please myself, as well."

"I like Hortense. But I shall not go to church with her. And I like Laure sometimes; but she is always

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making trouble for herself. And she does say things that are not quite true, even if she is trying to be good. And, oh, dear! I should think she would wear her knees out with all the prayers. I'm sure I couldn't remember so many saints."

Angelique smiled a little.

Sylvie thought of another grievance.

"Gervaise doesn't ask me to go out with him."

"Why we all went last night."

"But he talked to Claire all the time."

"And the young Count talked to you, and to Claire too. Sylvie, you must not be such a little jealous pate."

Sylvie pouted. Angelique tied her hat under her pretty chin, and, stooping suddenly, kissed Sylvie before she could make any protest.

The child went through to Barbe, who sat reading her French Bible.

"If I wanted to go to church with Hortense, could I?" she asked, abruptly.

"Why——" and Barbe hesitated. "Do you want to go?"

"No, I don't. I am not a Catholic. But Angel goes, and Gervaise. Why don't we have a church of our own?"

"Perhaps we will, some day. The Government wants to make all the people as much like Spanish as it can. But we can have our religion at home. Come and let me read to you about Christ coming, and the worship of the wise men."

Sylvie was very fond of listening. She even liked the rhythmical cadences of the old poems Gervaise read aloud, though she did not understand a word of them.

The singing was beautiful, Angelique thought. Her heart went out in reverent exaltation. She even caught

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a little of the Spanish service and the Latin prayers. More for pastime than anything else, she had studied a little Latin with Gervaise in the old walks about Brienne. And the simple, heart-felt worship appealed to her.

There were cordial greetings when the service was ended. Even on Sundays, the afternoon was largely devoted to pleasure and family reunions. But this was not Sunday.

Manuel Torres joined the young people. M. and Madame Lavalette headed the procession; the nurse had charge of Félice, who often insisted on being carried. Torres came on the side of Angelique, and, as the side-walks were narrow, they could not walk four abreast until they left the closely built streets.

"Señorita," the young Spaniard began, in his most delicately mellifluous tone, which had reverence as well as music in it, "is it true the young man, your cousin, is not head of the family—that there is an older person, who is away——"

"Yes—the *Sieur de Brienne*. But we do not know whether he is alive or not," and she sighed softly.

"Then your aunt, Madame Champe, is the responsible head of the family?"

"Yes," with a tint of wonderment in her voice.

"I wish to see Madame this morning."

The tone was very grave. The *Señor* did not even raise his eyes. There was a sort of business precision in his voice.

"Why—yes," yet Angelique hesitated a little. What could he want with Barbe?

"Your cousin, the *Señor Aubreton*, goes away presently, I have heard."

"Yes, to obtain some news of our other cousin," was her brief answer.

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"The Señorita is studying Spanish a little?" he ventured, when there had been quite a pause. "Is she not pleased with it?"

"I do not advance rapidly. After all, most of the people one meets use the French language. And, when Gervaise is gone, I dare say I shall give it up."

"Oh, Señorita, that would be a pity. It is beautiful and noble, and has a tenderness that is quite delicious. If I might suggest a teacher for the Señorita——"

Something in his tone warned her. A soft color flashed across her face, that was averted.

"I believe the birds sing all the year round here," Angelique began, irrelevantly. "Is there really no winter?"

"The season is doing its loveliest—no doubt, to convince the Señorita what a very desirable place of residence this is. It is the paradise of the earth," and he bowed ceremoniously. "I hope she will never desire to leave it."

"We may go back to France, if matters become more stable," she said, with a certain wilfulness.

"Oh, Señorita, I hope not," with very earnest emphasis.

They were to make a turn in the road that parted them from the Lavalettes, and farewells were exchanged. After that, the conversation was carried on between the two young men, but a conscious knowledge of Torres's errand began to pervade Angelique. She did not look his way when she invited him in, and led him through to the pretty court where Barbe often sat and sewed, as she could keep an eye on both Sylvie and Viny, who had become her satellite. But Barbe was not there.

"Please be seated, Señor," she said, formally. "I will send Madame Champe."

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Barbe was looking over Sylvie's frocks. The child was growing out of everything.

"Barbe," and the girl's face was suddenly scarlet, "the Spaniard, Señor Torres, is down in the court. He wishes to see you."

"To see me?" with a blank look.

"Yes. Barbe——" she came nearer and took both the hands tenderly in hers—looked beseechingly into the eyes that were always full of tenderness for her; "Barbe, I am afraid—one can feel things in the atmosphere about one. The young men are all so polite and say so many charming things to you that you would be silly to suppose they really meant anything; but this morning, and his desire to see you—oh, Barbe, if it is that, will you not dismiss him? I—I am not ready for lovers."

"Lovers, indeed! I think not. And a Spaniard, a Catholic! I was afraid to have you go to church this morning. See what has come of it!"

"But it would have come anyhow. And Gervaise is not old enough to carry weight. Be decisive and dignified, and do not give him any hope."

"Hope! *Merci!* I should think not."

"That's a good Barbe." Angelique kissed her tenderly.

Madame Champe considered herself fortified even to the point of indignation, but she had not counted on the delicate way the suave-mannered young man meant to approach his point. His opening conversation was to her alone, and its compliments rather confused her. He was voluble, yet preserved a certain grandeur that disarmed her. And after laying before her his family connection, his prospects in life (for he held an advantageous government position), he very courteously asked the honor of the Señorita's hand in marriage—the distinction of being the Señorita's affianced, until she could consent to

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a marriage, which would bestow on him the greatest earthly happiness.

"It is quite impossible," began Barbe, almost brusquely. "You are a Catholic and Mademoiselle is a Protestant."

"But a wife would follow her husband in this matter, Madame," he returned, with the most exquisitely polite certainty.

"She—she does not love you, Monsieur. She is too young and inexperienced."

"She has reached that most adorable age when the girl is blossoming into the woman. And, Madame, no well-bred, refined young girl would love, before a man had spoken. Is it not so with your countrywomen? I beg for the delightful privilege of teaching her this sweet lesson. I ask your approval and consent. I shall not hurry the Señorita, but I know I can persuade her to regard me with favor. The rest will come."

Barbe shook her head decisively, and stood up her very tallest.

"It is useless, Monsieur. And we must wait until we hear from the young Marquis. I would have no right——"

"You have all the rights, Madame. The Marquis may be dead. And if he returns and finds his cousin happy in being betrothed to the man of her choice, who occupies a good position, could he have the heart to make her unhappy?"

"She does not wish to accept you, Monsieur."

Torres raised his eyebrows in surprise. His look almost extinguished poor Barbe, whose courage was rapidly giving way.

"I must hear that from the Señorita herself," he began.

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"Will you allow me to see her—in your presence of course," bowing deferentially.

"I will call her." And Barbe withdrew with a formal courtesy, quite dismayed by the lover's pertinacity.

"You will have to come, Angel," and she was almost on the point of tears. "I can see now why it is the proper thing to apply to the father. He is, in a sense, the owner of his daughter. But when a poor girl has neither father nor mother—and the lover is so resolved! You see, he doesn't expect you to love him now—well, that is right enough, too."

"Come," said Angelique, with sudden bravery.

"Señor"—as she entered the court with a proud courtesy,—*"Madame Champe is right in what she has said. I do not desire a lover. I have no wish to be married."*

"But if you are the sole object of a man's heart? Señorita, I swear that I love you from the crown of your beautiful head to your dainty feet; that it will be the one endeavor of my life to surround you with every delight and luxury—to adore you—to make your days visions of radiance! You will be happier than any woman ever was."

"I am sorry you should be so in earnest. I cannot divide my interest from our unfortunate little home circle. I have no wish at present to be loved. I do not want to marry. Señor, be kind enough to respect my wishes."

"The Señorita will never find me ungentlemanly. Yet my regret is deep and sincere. I should have devoted my whole life to making you happy. Even now, I must love you——"

"Try to forget me in some other charming girl. There

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are so many of them," and she endeavored to smile, but it was a faint semblance.

"I shall be blind to their charms after having met the Señorita. It was the best Christmas gift I had to proffer——"

He looked so handsome and melancholy that Angel's heart was moved to pity, and yet she knew she must not express it, or her painful work would be all undone. So she stood a little stiff and cold.

"Adieu, Señorita, and take my best wishes for your welfare." Torres bowed with sad dignity.

"And mine, for your future welfare."

He turned and walked away, and presently they heard the gate clang.

"Oh, Barbe, how dreadful it is to have people love you!" and the girl threw herself in Barbe's arms.

"Does he love you so very much?" said Sylvie, emerging from a nook in the shrubbery. "And did he want to marry you?"

"You naughty little girl, were you listening?" Angelique had half a mind to shake her.

"Why, there is where I always sit when I put Telano to sleep," cried Sylvie, indignantly. "Jaques cleared it up for me, and made a seat with some vines. It's my corner!" and the child began to cry.

Putting Telano to sleep was a rather curious mesmeric process. Sylvie stroked his neck and murmured low sounds to him that had the effect of sending him into drowsy slumbers.

"Well, you must not speak of it," said Barbe, sharply. "No real lady ever gossips about such things. Yes, he wanted to marry Angelique, but of course it would never do. So that is another secret."

"I'll be sure to keep it. Oh, Angel, my heart would

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break if you and Gervaise both went away. What would I do?" and her voice was full of tears.

Angelique stooped and kissed her. She was a trusty little thing, after all.

"For I only heard what you said; your voice is so clear, Angel. And Telano takes his nap just at that time. He comes and looks at me so, out of his queer eyes that are black with yellow rims, and he does love me. When I'm not there he sits and cries. And—Angel, I'm very glad you are not going to marry Monsieur Torres. I like the American so much better. He has such splendid blue eyes."

"I'm not likely to marry him, either. He doesn't want any wife. And he is going away."

They were both to hear more about Señor Torres. Madame Henriade took Angelique to task the first time she saw her.

"You foolish girl, to refuse an offer like that!" she cried, in a gay tone, yet it had disapproval in it. "I explained to him that owing to the troubles in France you were not likely to have any dowry, and it made no difference. His father has an office in the Cuban government, and owns a big plantation. And Manuel can have his pick of some of the best girls," she was regardful of the feelings of those she liked, so she would not say, "richest."

"Then I wish he had selected one of them," Angel answered, quickly.

"But why not you, *cherie*? You are old enough to marry. And such opportunities do not come every day. He would adore you. Everything would be yours."

"He is Spanish, and I am French."

"Ah, yes, he knew that. As if it could make any difference. Some of the best Spanish blood has been

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mated with the Creole, and it makes a fine race. Because Spain and France so often cross sword's points, that is not to say we in the New World should quarrel. He is kind and generous of heart, and has a well-governed, affable temper. Little one, reconsider. It is throwing away such a chance as may not come again."

"Madame, I do not want to marry at present."

"But the years run away fast, and nothing is more attractive than youth. There is an old proverb: 'She who will not enter the golden gate when she may, too often finds it shut when she would.'"

"I am not looking for the golden gate. I cannot leave my aunt and Sylvie at present, especially now that Gervaise will go."

"Perhaps it is best to be satisfied; but I am afraid he will not bring back any tidings. Manuel would have been very good to thee, and waited."

"But I did not prefer him, even. They are all alike to me. I thank you for so much, Madame. We owe nearly all our pleasures to you; and I am truly sorry to grieve you. But I do not mean to think of lovers yet."

"Thou art too pretty not to have them think of thee."

Angelique wondered why she should feel so cold-hearted, when she enjoyed all youthful pleasures so keenly. What was she hoping for if Hugh de Brienne was found? She was not much more than a child that happy year when he had been her friend and companion. And he *did* belong to another. She had no right to demand even the old friendship of him. But what strange complications might ensue if Sylvie persisted in her belief that she had been truly married to Gervaise!

Sylvie kept the secret well, not even making any allusion to it. But Aunt Melanie heard it, and wondered

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that Madame Champe could uphold a girl in such foolishness when so fine an offer of marriage was made her.

"She was not a bit in love with him, Aunt; that was plain to be seen," remarked Henri. "She is not thinking of marriage, truly."

"Then it is time she was. To let slip a chance like that! And he in the government employ!"

Henri gave a curious little laugh. He had heard the whispers that, after all, Spain was not so secure. If the province should be turned over to France again! There was only one drawback. The First Consul had expressed himself strongly against slavery, and that would ruin the country. Still, French preference was intense.

So Hortense, running about the garden with Sylvie, shook her bit of gossip out of her news net; and then Sylvie felt that, in some way, she had been defrauded of a triumph.

"She is not going to marry any one. She has to stay with us until Gervaise comes back."

"But it would be dreadful for her to be an old maid; such a pretty girl, too. Aunt Melanie thought of going into a convent. She was very religious. Then papa wanted her to come and take charge of the house, and she did. But I do not think Aunt Melanie ever could have been pretty."

"Angel is coming to live with me," Sylvie said, proudly. "Ah, she had a secret that Hortense could not know."

"When you go back to France?"

Sylvie nodded.

"Oh, I shall be so sorry! But then I am older, and may have a lover of my own. Lucie Fleurien married, and went to Havana. Oh, what a grand wedding she had! All the paths were strewn with flowers; I mean to

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be married that way. Ah, if one could have a lover like the Count; but then he is very poor, and his people are no longer on the throne. I like a king best, don't you?"

Sylvie was not at all sure. And she was glad Claire Lavalette liked the Count so well. Gervaise could not be always with her.

As for Zenobie, she and Sylvie did not make much headway in friendship.

"What you can see about the little child," she said, loftily, to Hortense, "surprises me. A girl who nurses a crane and who is likely to grow up an ignoramus seems of very little account. Because she has long golden hair——"

"She is not an ignoramus! She can begin to talk quite well in Spanish; and she sews prettily. She can even embroider, and make lace. And they have some French poets they read aloud—she can repeat whole verses from them. Angel teaches her."

"Oh, Mam'selle Angelique is very grand, I believe. No doubt she is setting her cap for one of the Princes. Nothing less than a Prince will do."

Zenobie tossed her head.

"That is very mean of you." Hortense's dark eyes flashed.

"I suppose you are quite ready to put her in my place! I can find another friend. But I did not think it of you, Hortense, when we have known each other all our lives!"

There was a touch of upbraiding in the tone, and a certain pathos in the voice. They often had differences about one thing and another.

"It is not that at all. We go to school and church together, and we are both Catholics. Father Moras said she was a heretic," and the girl's voice sank to a whisper. "So I pray for her every night, that she may be converted

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to the true faith. And he said it would be a most excellent thing to get her to school to the nuns. When I am trying to follow the good priest's advice, it is very cruel in you to torment me."

"But you love her."

"She is very sweet."

"Oh, well, go on, then. Perhaps you are in love with Gervaise too!"

"Zenobie Lavalette, I have half a mind never to speak to you again!"

But they did speak the very next day. They could not keep angry very long.

Everybody was asked up to the birthday of Gra'mère Lavalette, and the young Princes paid her the compliment of going. She was ninety-eight now, and they hoped she would live to be a hundred. She had been one of the King's maids sent over to the colonies for wives for the men settlers—girls of the better class. She still had her little casket, or trunk, and one of the gowns she wore, so faded by age that it seemed a soft gray, with indistinct flowers.

Gra'mère was pillowed up in a great high-backed chair that had come from France fifty years before, and was rich in carven lilies and clamps of brass, much tarnished, though the strong hands of Olympie did their best to keep them bright—but the air was too moist. She was a large woman, with a good admixture of Indian blood—sold as a slave, having been captured in one of the battles between the whites and Indians. Once she had made her escape; but when she heard gra'mère lay very ill, she had gone back of her own accord, and had a strange affection for the little withered-up woman who had once been such a beauty that Pierre Lavalette, a man of means, and holding an office under the Royal Government, made

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her an offer of his heart and hand, and took her to his home, very comfortable and quite fine for those days. And now M. Lavalette was the third in the line, and proud enough of his ancestry.

She had always been rather petite—this pretty, courageous, Jeanne Lavalette, with dark shining hair, great black eyes, and bright pink cheeks, in those days. There had been many trials to live through—fierce Indian attacks—and in the wars at different times she had lost her five sons. One only had been married—the father of the present Pierre.

And now she had shrunk year by year. The beautiful hair had grown snowy-white, and the little that was left was gathered under a cap. The fair skin had lost its beauty and was wrinkled and yellow; but the eyes were still dark and bright, and looked at you sharply enough, to show that her mind was very active. Sometimes it lived mostly in the past, then flashed out with a sudden vigor. She was only a very little deaf.

Her room opened on the veranda, and was large and airy. She never came downstairs now, but often walked about leaning on the arm of her faithful attendant. It was full of curious relics of bygone times. A great canopied bedstead took much of the space at one side. It had belonged to one of the old governors, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, whose life had been the gayest and most extravagant of a corrupt administration—one of the many things that had made the earlier French reign a success. Curious chests of drawers, with griffins' heads for handles; chairs that had come from France and indicated various reigns. A veritable museum of curiosities it was. A quaintly carved buffet, standing on quite high legs and reaching up correspondingly high, was spread out with the silver of past generations that was the apple

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of gra'mère's bright eyes. Every morning Olympie had to count the pieces and tell what they were. When gra'mère felt in a discursive mood she would recall the story of each one and the gay scenes in which they had figured. Kerlerrec, who had succeeded the Marquis, and was recalled in official disgrace and thrown into the Bastille; M. d'Abbadie, with a lower rank, working hard at retrenchment, and, in spite of all, crushed at seeing the colony handed over to Spain. That old time always seemed freshest in her mind.

This day the fates had conspired to keep her especially fresh and bright. Her big chair was like a throne. Her great flowered brocade silk, half a century old, flowed about her like an iridescent sea. Her fine old lace fichu was crossed on her breast; a string of pearls was about her throat, her beads and cross were fastened at her waist; and, to-day, she did not look so near the end of the century.

Notable people came and went. M. de Boré congratulated her on the way she bore her years. Some of the Spanish officials dropped in; the Princes—and they recalled a reminiscence of the one great King of France she had seen. Lesser lights appeared, many simply bowing and wishing her good-fortune and health.

In an adjoining room were spread some refreshments, and several young ladies, with Claire at their head, presided. Young men loitered to breathe a few soft nothings or speak of the next ball and the pleasure they hoped to have.

Sylvie always recalled the scene as one of the curiosities of her life. She had a feeling at first that gra'mère must at some period have been a queen.

"What golden-haired *fille* is this?" the old lady exclaimed, rising a little in her chair. "Child, come here,

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and kiss my hand. You are so young and fresh; and, one day, you will be old, wrinkled, and your golden hair faded."

She held out her hand with its many rings. It was so small and pitiful. Sylvie pressed her warm, flushed cheek against it.

"Come and see me again. I like to look at you."

Sylvie was a little frightened; and when some one said, "What a beautiful child!" she shrank behind Barbe.

"Do you suppose I shall live to be as old as that?" she asked, as they were going home. "And to be all wrinkled and shrunken, and have a queer tremble in your voice——"

"But think of the attention paid her! It is not every one who lives to be almost a hundred. Oh, I don't wonder they are proud of her."

When Olympe was putting her mistress in the great high bed and wrapping her all up in blankets, she said: "The prettiest thing that came to give me good wishes was that little golden-haired girl. I should like to lay my hands on the silken, soft head. And such blue eyes. They are like the skies when I was young."

The Princes went away. There were strange rumors in the air, and several persons were arrested and banished to Cuba for too much enthusiasm. General Villaineuve was suspected of sympathizing with some plans for an overturn, and even M. de Boré was saved from accusation by the devotion of the place to one who had done so much for it—as the Governor well understood two such arrests as this would be opening a door to enemies on all sides.

Roger Norton was ready for his journey. Now that it had come, they could not bear to part with Gervaise.

"I feel that it will all be useless," said Barbe, in a dis-

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couraged tone. "And what will happen to us in the meanwhile——"

"Nothing evil will happen to us, I am quite sure," returned Angel, with courage. "We shall be lonely, but we have some such good friends; and M. Lavalette will be like a guardian to us. Only to-day he said we were to come to him in any perplexity."

They had been very happy. Claire was very fond of Gervaise, and it would be so easy for him to mistake her regard, which had nothing of love in it. The separation would be good for him. He was growing too pleasure-loving.

She went out in the garden, for Sylvie's passionate grief quite unsettled her. How strong the child's feelings were! Some day the matter must be explained to her.

There was a step, and some one parted the dense shrubbery, coming across, instead of by the walk. It shook out a cloud of fragrance. She turned and flushed deeply.

"That commonplace adieu was not sufficient," Roger Norton said, hurriedly. "A hundred things may happen, and I may never see you again. Still, I am generally on the lucky side. But I wanted to say—I ask nothing of you either but remembrance—that—I love you! You know nothing about love—I should like to teach you some day. Adieu—I shall carry you in my heart."

He caught her hand and pressed it to his lips—and was gone. Angelique stood in utter amaze.

"Oh, Mam'selle, come at once," cried Viny. "The little one has an hysteric, and Mo'sieu Gervaise cannot get away. Oh, poor child!"

Angelique ran. Barbe stood there helpless. The girl

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unclasped the small arms that were like a rope around the neck of Gervaise and gathered the slight form to her heart. The great sobs shook her, and her eyes were transfixed, as if she was half unconscious.

"Go quick. Oh, Gervaise, heaven be with you and bring you back safely! And if you can find him!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DIFFERENT PHASES OF LOVE.

VINY carried the poor little thing upstairs and laid her on the bed. She had not fainted, for she breathed at intervals, but she was limp and helpless. The smelling salts sent little shivers over her, but did not completely rouse her.

"I don't know what we are to do," said Barbe, helplessly. "She's such a child in most things—a baby! She talks to that crane until I do believe he understands every word she says. And the cockatoo really cries after her, and all those herons—and I feel so afraid, sometimes, she'll begin to charm those horrible snakes and reptiles! I did think she was caring less for Gervaise, but it has gone deeper, it seems. And that most unfortunate marriage!"

"But if Hugh never should come back! If Gervaise should find he had died or been killed——"

"Then the way is clear for establishing this marriage."

There was a great wrench at Angelique's heart. Perhaps it would be better this way. What brought the

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vision of the enthusiastic young American before her? She hated herself that she could think of him.

"Oh, but you see," cried Barbe, in anguish, "he does not care for her in that way. She is merely a sweet, pretty child to him, that he has had to soothe and appease and put off until she can understand. It is not real love. Now, Philippe adored her."

Angelique sighed and went on with her ministrations. Between them both they succeeded in restoring her, but she looked at them out of woe-begone eyes.

"Oh," she cried, at length, "he will never, never come back! I did not think it would be so hard. There are all those Indian tribes, with horrid names, who scalp every one or burn them at the stake. Oh, poor Gervaise! And now I wish we had never seen that M'sieu Norton. Did he send that beautiful hound? I shall hate it, I know."

"Zenobie Lavalette goes wild over it. We can let her take it."

Something like a flash crossed the weary blue eyes. "I would rather Hortense should have it," she made answer.

"He may have taken it with him. It is not here, and he said nothing about it when he went away."

Angelique colored consciously, with the recollection of what he did say.

"I want Viny to come and hold me," she insisted, rather fretfully.

Viny came, and took her on her lap in the great reed rocking-chair, and crooned out songs in her soft voice, that was like a rushy rivulet and had no high notes.

The next day, and the next day, Sylvie lay on the small white cot, or was in Viny's arms. She wanted nothing to eat—she would not even talk. Her eyes seemed to grow

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larger and more wistful, and the color went out of her cheeks.

"What shall we do?" Barbe kept saying. "Poor *petite* lamb. She looks like her mother."

"Is that Telano crying?" she asked of Viny on the eve of the second day.

"Poor Telano. He has done nothing but mourn all day little Missy. He will not eat anything."

"That is like me." She smiled faintly. "Do you think he would starve?"

"He looks so sorrowful, and shakes his head."

"And he might die. Oh, Viny, I shouldn't like to die. It must be horrid to be shut up in one of those stone vaults and never see any one again. All the world is so lovely! The magnolias are coming out—I smell them—and the jasmin. Yes, it is pleasanter to live even if—the people you love do go away. Viny, carry me downstairs, and let me comfort poor Telano."

Viny took her down and sat her in the hammock. Telano ran awkwardly from the crape-myrtle allée where he had been bemoaning his sorrows to the birds of the air. The sun was almost down, and the soft red and purplish lights were tinted with lavender and green.

"Poor Telano!" He laid his head in the lap of his little mistress and uttered strange, pathetic cries, some of them not unlike a turkey's gobble. When he had gone through the whole gamut of sounds, he looked up in Sylvie's face.

"Yes, Telano, two whole long days! I wasn't asleep nor quite awake, but in some queer sort of atmosphere—and I know how it seems." She patted his head, and he arched his neck, then took a few steps away and came slowly back.

"No, I can't take a run with you. But you shall have

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some bread. All the run has gone out of me, and I just want to sit still. I haven't gone entirely away from you, so you can't understand, though you do know so much. It may be a whole long year before Gervaise comes back, and a hundred things may happen to him. Nothing much happens to little girls, only they grow and grow and get to be women; but it takes a long while," with a sigh.

Viny returned with some bread. Sylvie crumbed it, but Telano did not eat ravenously, as if he had been neglected or as if the pond had refused its usual sustenance. Then he came and stood on one foot beside her, rubbing her shoulder occasionally, with sympathetic intelligence, while she talked on in a caressing strain.

Angelique appeared at the edge of the court.

"Monsieur Norton has sent the dog," she began stiffly. "A slave has him. What shall we do, Sylvie? You do not want him."

Sylvie was a little offended at the tone. "Send him here to me," she returned.

"But——" in a hesitating tone.

"I want to see him," rather pettishly.

The slave, a young fellow belonging to the barber, had him in charge. He had brought him up the day before, but Jaques had dismissed him rather summarily, with the tidings that Mam'selle was ill, and could not be bothered with the dog.

He bowed most obsequiously, having met with a rather cool reception from Angelique.

"M'sieu Norton ordered that I should bring him to you," he began in a rather deprecating tone. "He is a mos' beautiful creature, Mademoiselle, and so gentle, so loving, so true. If you were to go away at any time, or tire of him, I am to keep him until M'sieu comes back."

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He had the dog in leash—a magnificent, fawn-colored hound with a long slender head, fine pink nostrils, and most beautiful, entreating eyes. He halted in a questioning attitude.

“Hylas, come here,” Sylvie said, gently.

Hylas obeyed, and stood before her a sort of proud suppliant. There was a whole story in his glance—the story Roger Norton had told more than once. Sylvie had made the dog’s acquaintance before, and admired him.

“I wonder if you would like to live here, Hylas? I have Telano, and you would have to be good friends with him.” She hugged the crane up closer, who rather glared at the new-comer, and the pink rim of his eyes grew fiery.

Hylas gave his tail several emphatic twirls, and his eyes said, “I have been told to obey. Your will must be mine.”

“You are so very handsome and strong, and would take care of me, I know.”

“As for killing snakes, Mam’selle, he’s a master. He never lets one get way.”

Hylas assented to that, emphatically, and came a step nearer.

“Oh, what a pretty collar! Let me see——”

He put his nose in her lap. Telano gave a hiss, but he looked steadily at the crane. No doubt he would have enjoyed twisting his neck with a good strong shake.

“Hylas! Sylvie Perrier,” she read. “Oh, yes, I must keep him, then. Everybody will know he belongs to me.” She smiled with delight. “Take off that ugly rope, and—I am obliged to you for bringing him. I wonder if he will be content? I do not like dogs, generally, but I

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like him already. He looks so wise. Hylas, will you like to stay here?"

Did the dog understand? How much the brute creation responds to, as if it surely did. He gave a curious sound, not a whine, not a bark, but it appeared to have a note of satisfaction in it. He touched the little hand with his tongue, caressingly; his eyes seemed to overflow with promise.

"You may come to-morrow and see if he feels at home and would like to stay," and Sylvie smiled dismissingly.

The man murmured thanks, and touched his hat, braided of the young river reeds—an art learned from the Indian squaws.

Telano did not take very kindly to the head in his mistress's lap. He would have been delighted to make an onslaught on the eyes watching him so fearlessly.

"Now, you must be good friends," she advised, gravely. "Oh, Viny, isn't it funny? They are like Hortense and Zenobie! No, not quite like, for Zenobie doesn't love me at all, but she does not want Hortense to have me to herself."

"Jealous," explained Viny, sententiously.

"And she was so cross that day *grâ'mère* wanted to see me; I was almost afraid, she is so old, and her eyes are so sharp. And she made *Olympie* show me so many queer things; and the frock that came from Paris in her little trunk, and some splendid rings, and a miniature of old *gran'père*, set round with diamonds—just like those we had to sell when we came here. Hortense loves me; sometimes I wish she did not love me so much and want to kiss me all the time. Which will be Hortense, and which will be Zenobie?"

She laughed quite naturally, and glanced from one to the other with a sense of amusement.

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"They will both love you, Mam'selle; so, neither can be Zenobie. You are so sweet, everything loves you."

Sylvie sighed. Did Gervaise love her very much? He was not as vehement as Hortense.

"Viny, fix the cushions in the hammock. I want to lie down. Telano, come around this side, and you can stay here, Hylas."

Hylas sat down on his haunches and looked kinglike, his eyes, so full of wordless knowledge, steadily bent upon his new young mistress.

Was he thinking of the master, so far away?

Viny swayed the hammock gently, and drove away the gnats with a great fan. By and by Telano began to nod also, and he presently thrust his bill under his wing. But Hylas watched like a sentinel.

"She has kept the dog," Angelique announced when she saw the slave go out of the gate with a coil of rope about his arm. She could not tell why, but it annoyed her. It brought Roger too close. She did not want to think of him.

Sylvie was very languid for several days. Hylas came up on the balcony, and slept at Sylvie's door at night. When she felt a little stronger, she took Hylas about with her, explaining the situation to him.

"Oh," with a cry of delight, "how beautiful you have made this, Jaques! And you have cleared up all the wild things—they grow so fast. Oh, lovely swans, you have a much finer home. Jaques, who told you?" raising her glad, eager eyes.

"No one. I've had it in my mind some time. Now one can see about a little. It is really a bayou," and he laughed delightedly.

He had dredged out the pond and enlarged its area, making in some places a bed of gravelly stones that shone

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in the bottom. A little stream fed it on one side, that was lost in the dense woods. The other widened and narrowed until it spent itself in the river. But instead of the river ever draining these small streams and ponds, they seemed to grow larger from the overflow of the mighty current. The swans' shelter had been made more secure, the herons were down one end by themselves, and delighted in wading up and down the swampy inlet. A small stone wall and platform had been added, and the rustic seats renewed.

"How good you are to me, Jaques!" Her voice was full of emotion and she hung on his arm affectionately.

"Who could help being good to thee! And, Mam'selle, we will take walks about and find many beautiful things. I never saw so much grow in any country. It seems as if the good God saved his choicest gifts and creations for this New World. I hope we shall never need to go back to France."

"I shall not go if the others do," she answered, decisively. "I shall live here always."

Jaques laughed softly. She was as much in love with the New World as he.

So by degrees Sylvie woke languidly to her older interest in daily living, but not quite her olden gayety. She was so fond of all the out-of-doors creatures, the birds knew her and held their heads on one side in listening attitude, looking out of bright eyes as she talked to them. The swans came at the sound of her voice, the ducks rushed hither and thither when she came.

"Do you suppose it is just because I bring them some choice bits," she asked of Jaques. "The ducks are greedy, I know. But oh, how beautiful they are, in all their shining array of gold and green and blue and every lovely tint mingled! I suppose it is enough for some

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things just to look beautiful. The flowers cannot understand affection, yet we give them love for love."

"Thou art a curious little being," said Jaques.

"But Telano really does love. How sorry he seemed when I was ill! His face was dismal, and his neck so long. He missed Gervaise too, I think."

"Ah, he did indeed!"

"And the house seems so strange and still without him. He was always whistling to the birds or singing a merry carol. Do you think he cared very much for Claire Lavalette? She is ten times sweeter than Zenobie, and he used to go there so much."

"Oh, no," Jaques tossed his head.

"Henri de Longpré is very nice, but he talks all the time to Angel. And I cannot tell whether he is laughing at me or not. I do not like to be laughed at."

"Mam'selle, few of us do," dryly. "We must try and laugh back."

Sylvie did not understand how any one could, when one was a little hurt.

Angel did not grow especially fond of Hylas, and he preserved a cool indifference toward her. Yet sometimes when he studied her with those grave, fathomless eyes, she felt sure Monsieur Norton had confided his secret to him and she shrank at the uncanny consciousness.

"We must be the better friends, Hylas," Sylvie would sometimes say when they were wandering about the thickets. "I can't tell any one else, but I am sure Gervaise did not want to go and she sent him, so you have lost your friend, and I mine. It is all very mysterious and very sad. As for the Marquis de Brienne—oh, I think he must be what is called a myth."

Hylas nodded sagely.

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It was not Gervaise's love for Sylvie that Angel had been anxious about, but his very great fondness for Claire. She gave the same smile and sweetness to every one, but it seemed as if that especial one had awakened it. How did she manage to be so dainty and beguiling and yet keep so innocent at heart? That puzzled Angelique. But she could not endure the thought that Gervaise should fall so uselessly in love and be disappointed.

Claire came down one morning flushed and smiling, with a mysterious sweetness in her eyes and a curious sound in her voice.

"Oh, what has happened?" cried Angelique. "Nothing sad, I know. Gra'mère must be quite as well as usual."

"Oh, yes, and very happy. We are all very happy," and her eyes were full of lustrous light.

"Then your father must have had some great good fortune."

"Yes, it is good fortune, I suppose, when children marry well. Fathers and mothers are both glad. It is natural to make new homes."

"You do not mean——"

"I am to be betrothed on Thursday. There will be a little feast, and you must all come. It is a saint day, too. We are to go to mass in the morning, and though I shall be beside *maman*, I shall have the delight of knowing he is there."

"He—who?" Angelique was vainly trying to think.

"Ah, you will hardly guess. It is Eugene Fleurien. You met him at the General's birthday, I believe. He is very fine and attractive, and rumor gave him to the Abeilles, but Marie was betrothed a month ago. Last week he went and spoke to papa, and he discussed the

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matter with dear *maman*, and then Eugene came and, as I said, we are to be betrothed and sign the contract."

"Are you very much in love with him?" For it seemed to Angel as if Claire had taken so much general pleasure that some deeper feeling was requisite. She had discovered charms in all young men.

"Oh, not until afterward," and she colored deeply. "Then we shall love each other sincerely. It will not be a long engagement. He has a large plantation at Pointe Coupée, and lives there with his father. His two sisters are married, his mother is dead. His father has been desirous this last year that he should marry and is so pleased that I know I shall be admired."

It seemed too prosaic, Angel thought, for such a really delightful young girl.

"Oh, I hope you will be very happy," she cried.

"I am sure to be. Eugene is so good and merry, and is sure to be a rich man. And now that some one has invented what is called a cotton-gin, cotton will be profitable. But they are sugar-cane growers mostly. And, Angel, you must come and stay days with me; there are fine rides around, and they have horses. When have you heard from Gervaise, and where is he? And that curious American who was so charming when he had a mind?"

No, she had not cared for Gervaise except in a friendly fashion, and Gervaise had sent many messages to her and said, "I would write to her if it was proper. Do you think it might be?"

"Only yesterday a letter came. They were at some straits in Michigan that it twists your tongue all up to pronounce. I did not even get it spelled out. And wonderful lakes, oh, many times larger than Lake Pontchartrain, and such copper mines—enough to make a hun-

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dred people rich. The country is full of Indians, but they all seem friendly now."

"And the other cousin?"

"Oh, they have heard nothing as yet. The American had some interest in the copper-working and in furs. They will go down to this place called Detroit, and there they may learn what befell him."

Angelique choked down a little sigh.

"And now let us find Madame Champe. *Maman* sends the invitations, and you will not be displeased that she does not come herself. There is so much to do. Though why, I do not see," laughing gayly. "There is always plenty in the house to eat and drink."

Madame Champe was taken very much by surprise, but she made quite a formal little speech and then gave very heartfelt wishes. Yes, they would be sure to come. Angelique had never attended a betrothal feast.

"And the little one, too. Is she quite well?"

"Not as well as I could wish," replied Barbe. "There is a little *malaise* about her, and she grows tall very fast."

"She and Zenobie amuse us so. They are always a little captious, and say sharp things that papa laughs over afterward. But Zenobie envies the splendid dog. Is it the American's?"

"Yes. We only have it to keep, though Sylvie's name is on the collar."

Claire kissed her friend warmly. She was also going to invite two more neighbors.

"It is quite strange," commented Barbe.

"It took me by surprise. I suppose Claire did have a preference for him or she could not have consented so easily."

"Still, if the parents thought it best. They are wiser, more experienced and understand what is needed to make

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life run smoothly. It is not all romance and a tender voice or delightful honeyed words and smiles. And a man knows men better than women can."

Angelique made no further comment. Madame Henriade was still very kind to her and showed her many favors.

"But I meet so few desirable people of your religion," she said, "if you are going to let that stand in the way. They do not seem to be drawn into my circle, that is the trouble."

"Oh, do not think of me in that way, Madame. If I have your charming friendship, that is all I ask. And now I must devote myself to Sylvie."

"You are very sweet, *ma fille*, too sweet to be left to fade alone to old age."

"Old age is a long way off," gayly.

"Sylvie had better go to school and be with other girls," Barbe said one morning. "One knows not what to do with her. Only yesterday she was half captivated by the life of the Indian girls when that pretty one was in, trying to sell her goods. Living in a wigwam and working beads into all sorts of things, and rambling through forests and canoeing—and I would not trust myself in a canoe for a pile of gold."

"I must take up Spanish again with her."

"And at home girls learned to sew and knit and make bread and puddings and preserves, and all sorts of things needed in housekeeping. Here the slaves do it for you. But among the Acadians there were little girls knitting, there were mothers sewing and tending babies. Slaves make one idle and helpless."

The betrothal was a very delightful and friendly occasion. The young couple did not hesitate to show a decided preference for each other afterward. The elder

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Monsieur Fleurien was rather small, a pleasant, white-haired man with round cheeks full of the bloom of the autumn of life rather than its winter. He was delighted with his son's choice, and inclined to hurry the marriage forward that they might the sooner have her in their home.

Long engagements were not much in favor. The matter was well considered beforehand. Where and how the young people would live, and what their income would be, was all settled. If it was little, they made themselves content and dreamed of better times; if it was liberal, they might be gay enough between whiles when no babies claimed the first share of love and attention. For motherhood was one of the great factors in that old life.

Father Charlier and Father Moras of the convent were both present, and their blessing was almost as solemn as a marriage benediction. Everybody rejoiced, and there was much cordial good feeling and pleasantry. And though in the cafés and cabarets and at some of the officers' houses there might be drunkenness and carousing, disputes ending in duels, one found little of it in private families. There was much merry-making without any excess.

"Thou wilt soon have another daughter to husband," said Père Fleurien, with a smile, as he watched Zenobie. "She is of high mettle. Madame, I think my son has the choice, but I wish as good a husband for her as Mam'selle Claire will get. And we shall both give thanks many a time for your wise up-bringing."

"Yes. Zenobie will soon leave the convent now. She is, as you say, of high spirit, but a good girl, full of affection and respect."

Zenobie was growng tall rapidly, and piquant rather than really handsome, but vivacious and capable of doing

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much execution with her eyes, which had not the demure sweetness of Claire's, but would, no doubt, be as dangerous. Sylvie looked pale and thin, but her golden hair was like a cloud about her. And though many at that age wore it in a high knot with a comb or a great cluster of bows, Sylvie's flowed free in a mass of shining waves, the ends breaking into curls. Girls were very simply dressed in those days. A white gown, scant and ankle length, with perhaps a ruffle around the bottom; a short waist, square in the neck, with a little lace edging, and perhaps a string of beads. Sylvie wore her pretty corals.

Laure Gorgas was outside of all this. For that matter, she had no real standing, belonged to no particular class. At the convent there was small distinction made, but outside it was quite different, for a girl who knew nothing about her parents.

So Sylvie was almost adored when she went down to Mère Milhet's. Dolamine and Lucie were delighted with a bit of gossip, and Laure listened wide-eyed.

"Zenobie will sit on the topmost round of the ladder now, and step on the fingers of those who venture to climb," Laure declared, sharply. "It is a very fine marriage, everybody says. And Zenobie will soon leave the convent and be a young lady having lovers. See what it is to have a father with money!"

"I have no father and no money," said the little one, soberly.

"Then you'll have hard work getting a husband, Mam'selle, unless you grow very handsome."

Sylvie smiled with inward comfort. She had a husband already. When she was twelve she might announce it. And now Claire would not want him.

"What are you smiling about?" queried Laure.

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"Angelique could have had a nice husband and she had no money," replied the child, with quick wit.

"Mam'selle Angelique is handsome." Then, softening a little, "It is very good of you, Sylvie, to come and tell us all about it. And the old gra'mère has taken a fancy to you, I hear; but she is so old I should not think she could tell one girl from another. Did they bring her down?"

"Oh, no. A procession went up. The priests first, then M. and Madame Lavalette and the young people. All the guests did not go. It was very pretty. I shall go to see her married."

"Ah, Mam'selle Sylvie, if you could but find your way to the true Church. I pray for you."

Pointe Coupée was considerably more than a hundred miles above the old city, but, though given mostly to large plantations, was the centre for trade with the posts of Natchez, with Baton Rouge, Natchitoches, and also the Southern ports as well as the city. One of the most prominent planters of the province was M. Poydras, who had taken such a warm interest in the young Princes. His was a rather romantic story. Roger Norton had told it over to them one afternoon, sitting in the old garden. While in the French navy he had been taken prisoner and sent to England, where he spent his time wisely in acquiring the language. He managed to escape and made his way to Louisiana just in time to see it become a Spanish possession. The river filled him with dreams of commerce, and he travelled from plantation to plantation, supplying families with needful wares until he had accumulated sufficient to purchase this point and enlarge his business. Gentle in disposition, honest to the most scrupulous degree, he presently had the trade from

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St. Louis to Florida. Now he had built a cotton gin in two places, and his plantation had been added to as far as False River. Other planters had settled there, Fleurien being among the earlier ones.

Now M. Poydras went up and down the river in his own boats, and dealt in all kinds of merchandise as well as furs. He had planned to visit France as the Revolution broke out, but he was so shocked by the excesses that he could only pity his unhappy country and most kindly assist the refugees. His manly heart was full of sympathy for his fellow-creatures. He had rescued more than one poor slave from misery and given him a comfortable home.

Claire was full of delight. In a certain way she had grown very fond of Angelique, though their natures were so different. She had the warmth and effervescence of the Creole, restrained up to a certain point, joyous, content with what was not hers at present, but could be by and by. Marriage she counted on; there were but two spheres for women, convent life and marriage. Young men had been mostly alike to her. It was their province to say pretty, complimentary things; to hold one's fan and gloves; to carry one's shawl; to gather choice flowers if a party were out for a ramble, well chaperoned, to be sure; to dance with; perhaps to raise one's eyes and meet other eyes in speechless adoration—a glance to be remembered all one's life, yet having nothing of longing or a taint of infidelity in it when she is a happy wife and mother.

Claire could recall more than one such glance. Of them all, she had wondered who would have the right to her hand and heart. More than one of them had a charm. And then Père Fleurien had come down from Pointe Coupée and held an interview with Monsieur Lavalette,

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and everything ran along smoothly. Eugene was young, good-looking, in fair circumstances, his father's idol, tender, well mannered, and with a fund of endearing expressions. What more could a well-trained girl ask?

"But won't it be lonely up there on the large plantations that are miles in extent? And you have such tender parents, so many fine friends, so many balls and gayeties, and the pleasant walks down around the Plaza when the band is playing. Do you love him so well that you will be content there alone——"

Claire gave a soft, satisfied, amused laugh as she interrupted Angelique with:

"Alone! Why, I shall have Eugene *all* the time," and her eyes were suffused with a tender, triumphant light. "Now, it is only a brief while, now and then, he has to come down the river and cannot stay long, and"—blushing in a spasm of self-surrender—"there can be so little talk. But our eyes say, 'Do you love me?' We both ask the same question, *chérie* Angel, and both give the same answer from our full hearts, and understand. And the clasp of the hand, the gift of flowers, the little murmurs that are the music of love's tongue! *Maman* is very good, she has little errands away, or chatters to Félice, but when we have each other *all* the time!" and Claire sighed with a sensation of anticipated bliss that seemed to exhale the delight of hope from every pulse.

Angelique looked and wondered. Had Gervaise been older, could she have loved him so supremely, or Henri de Longpré? Both had given her a boy's worship.

"And there will be Papa Fleurien to cherish and make happy. He might not have approved me, or he might have chosen some one else, so I must be sweet and grateful. He loves me, and if a girl cannot be content with the adoration of two men, she must be ungrateful indeed! Ah,

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Mademoiselle, perhaps the girls brought up in New France—for it will always be that to us as long as it bears the name of King Louis—are not so cold by nature, have not been so trained—how shall I put it?—are not ashamed to dream of love, which must be a woman's crown always. Oh, yes, I shall be very happy and not lonely. And if the good God should send us children——”

No, Angel could never have cared for or wanted to spend days and weeks with Señor Torres.

It was odd Claire should recall the same person.

“We were all so sorry about Monsieur Torres. You do not understand how love comes when one has the right; it is like the plant that flowers when its time arrives and everything is appropriate. And did you hear—I suppose you do not mind”—with a deprecating glance out of her half-raised eyes—“that Monsieur is to marry Mam'selle Aurore, whose aunt is rich and very fond of her, and does not deny that she will give her handsome settlements?”

“He was very generous then to want me without any *dot*,” and Angel paid him a sudden, heartfelt respect.

“Well—there was the good birth—the cousin of a Marquis,” laughed Claire. “And who knows but a fortune may come some day?”

While the marriage was to be quite an affair in one respect, there was no great display as in modern times. The trousseau was simple and serviceable; she was to wear all gra'mère's jewels to church, then they were to be restored to the strong box until Zenobie needed them, and at gra'mère's death were to be divided among the three girls. There would be some jewels awaiting Madame at Pointe Coupée, the gift of her father-in-law.

“It is such a sorrow you cannot be one of the maids,” Claire said, delicately, a fortnight beforehand. “But there

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will be a mass, which you do not use. We think it right to begin our lives with that blessing of the good God. But you are to visit me, you and the little Sylvie, and we will go over to M. Poydras, whom you will like so much. He has books and music, and is so charming one wonders why he never married. He has been so good to some young people, putting them on their feet, and helping them to win homes. Oh, yes, you will come often, and the dear Madame Champe. And we will wait for what the good Father has in store for you. I know you will be happy, you are so amiable and devoted."

The marriage was indeed a pretty occasion. The Cathedral was mostly finished now, and already boasted some fine gifts from various patrons. And then there was the journey to the wharf, and though the mode of conveyance was only a flatboat, one of M. Poydras's own that he had kindly proffered his neighbor, there was a new tent spread out on it, and flags were flying, while the slaves were attired in their best and gayest, and full of grinning mirth. It was quite a gala day, and the happy young couple started with a freight of good wishes that were given in sincerity.

"Oh, dear!" cried Sylvie as they entered the old gate, "how lonesome it will be now! I wish some one else would marry. I saw Laure among the school children, and I expect she will talk about it for a month. Zenobie looked very grand, didn't she, Angel? And now she will be Mademoiselle Lavalette. Laure says she is sure to marry Henri."

"What nonsense you children do talk!" said Barbe.

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CHAPTER XIV.

OF MANY THINGS.

YES, it was lonely; Angelique felt sometimes that she could hardly endure it. Madame Henriade was as charming as ever, but there was no Gervaise to shield her with brotherly attentions when others became obtrusive. So she went less into society.

Education among women was not at all advanced at this period. The French schools had been quite discountenanced, and they taught about the same branches as the Ursulines, except that they did aim to keep alive a certain knowledge of French and its literature. But to be sweet, amiable, and vivacious, to receive compliments gracefully, to dress prettily, to lower the eyes in modest delight when a man talked to you, to be able to make a good impression as much on some one's father or mother as on himself, was about all the aims a woman needed. And yet it is true they made delightful wives and devoted mothers. Of the undercurrent even then seething in New Orleans they were supposed to know nothing. They heard the band on the Plaza, attended by some male relatives as well as a chaperon, they went decorously to the theatre when the plays were moral; but the husbands and sons attended dances where beautiful quadroons in the airiest of raiment disported themselves as paid dancers, and sometimes there was quite a rivalry between managers for these attractions.

Angelique had met with an adventure one day; a pale, rather care-worn-looking woman had been making some purchases at a store kept by a Spaniard who had the reputation of underselling his brethren. It was a miser-

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able place and seemed to have a strange assortment. She was looking at a beautiful vase that some poor body had doubtless sold at a sacrifice. A fierce sound on the one side, a beseeching appeal on the other, and she glanced at the disputants. The man was small, savage-eyed, with great earrings in his ears, and a long black beard; the woman slim and fair, frightened to the last degree.

"Oh, Madame," she cried, "I have lost my purse. I am quite sure I had it when I entered the store. I would give back the articles, but he will not have them, and threatens me with arrest. Oh, what shall I do?"

"She is a swindler," cried the man, in a jargon of both French and Spanish. "They come in here often. They lose their purses! She shall be arrest! I will not suffer any longer."

Jaques stood talking with an acquaintance a few doors away. Angelique had wandered on. She glanced at him, then said to the woman:

"How much is it?"

She tremblingly mentioned the sum.

"It is a lie," he shouted. "You mean to cheat. I will have you taken to jail!"

"What do *you* say the amount is?" Angelique asked with an air of authority as she saw Jaques approaching.

"I will not be cheated, I tell you——"

"Monsieur Champe, will you inquire into this matter and pay the man what is due?" she requested with dignity. "Hear the woman's story first."

The shopkeeper curbed his furious passion, though he still contradicted the woman. "Come," said Angelique, leading her into the narrow street which seemed to be an offshoot.

"Oh, how can I thank you——"

"You are not French," remarked Angelique.

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"No, Madame, an American. I ought not have gone in that place, but I bought some articles last week very cheap, and saw something else I needed. I went there to-day. I am sure I laid my purse down. He tumbled some goods over it, and when I looked he was angry and called me names. I don't know what I would have done but for you. Oh, God reward you!"

"Was it all the money you had with you?" Angelique asked, delicately.

"All I had in the world, Madame. I bought my bread and a bit of meat first—I have two hungry boys," and she flushed.

"Jaques rejoined them. He had beaten the man down to his customer's amount, but the purse had not been found. They walked on together.

"Do you live in this direction?" Angelique questioned.

"Yes, Madame. A little street called Beauvier. My husband is a boatman. He is seldom away so long as this, and there are so many stories of pirates about the Gulf. I have been much worried. My two boys are at work in one of the warehouses on the levee. It is not good, but boys cannot starve. And I give lessons sometimes. But so few people care to learn English. Oh, I desire to go East again. We thought there were better chances here, but——"

The tears that she was too proud to wipe away overflowed her eyes.

"I have been trying to learn a little English," said Angelique, "but my cousin went away."

"Oh, if Madame would allow me to restore the money that way——"

"You are quite welcome to it. I am glad we rescued you. Do not go into the shop again."

"Indeed, I shall not. But, Madame, can you not under-

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stand how much better satisfied I would be to pay the debt? I am honest," with an accent of pride.

Something in the face interested Angelique, and she had so few sources of interest now.

"If you like to have it so. Afterward you may continue them," with her charming smile that warmed the troubled heart. "But it is a long way out—on the St. John road."

She was too delicate to propose to come into town, yet the woman looked so worn she was sorry to put her to the trouble.

"It is so beautiful in that direction, Madame—I am not sure it is Madame——" coloring deeply.

"No," Angelique smiled with charming grace.

"I said so in the shop because I did not see that you were attended. Marriage carries so much weight here, and that beast might have insulted a young girl."

"Thank you for that thoughtfulness."

"Girls marry so young here. Oh, I like the East much better. I could have courage to walk all the way back, but one must needs eat. And there are the boys. Mam'selle, will you allow me to come to-morrow?"

"If you prefer, yes."

"We sometimes walk out that way on Sundays. There is no Protestant Church, you see, and the way is so beautiful one can worship God by the roadside. In that direction there is a very pretty girl who has a hound which belonged to an American, a Mr. Norton."

"Oh, do you know him?"

"My husband did a little. He is a very fine, generous man. My boys thought the dog so splendid, and they have seen it with the child."

"She is my cousin. We will both study English."

"You are so good, Mam'selle. I can never thank you."

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"It was only a little thing." Angelique colored now.

"It is the little things that show people's goodness. Great things may be done from any other motive. Here is my street, not a very fine situation, but the house is not bad, and I could not endure the crowded rows. Why, when there was so much room, did they build so close together?"

"They had then to think of defence from enemies. And it is improving all the time; Jaques"—who was walking behind,—“this lady is to come up to-morrow. I shall explain to Aunt.”

The woman made her adieus in a manner that showed she was not ignorant of the usages of society. Then the two walked on.

"Are you quite sure, Mam'selle, it is the proper thing to do? You know nothing about the woman," Jaques began in an anxious tone.

"No, I am not sure it is. She is an American, and certainly shows some breeding. I felt very sorry for her. We found so many friends on our coming here, and we ought to help others if we can. I am tired of my little round and long for something different. Shall I marry, Monsieur Jaques?"

She turned her face archly and smiled out of sparkling eyes.

"There is no one now that Master Gervaise is gone—and all demoiselles need looking after."

"Oh, yes, you are a host in yourself. See how soon you brought that beast of a shopkeeper to terms. And Barbe! Then there is the American's dog."

"And Carlos would tear any one in pieces. But every day I think how wild it was to let M'sieu Gervaise go away. For I know Sieur Hugh must be dead."

Angelique sighed. She was losing faith herself.

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Barbe hesitated a little over the new acquaintance. Sylvie was all curiosity and eagerness.

"I know quite a good many English words," she said. "I repeat them to Hylas. Do you suppose he was born in America?"

"Why, it is all America, Sylvie. I wish we knew a little more about the country. If it was the fashion to learn a great many things!"

Angelique sighed. A girl's life bounded only by needlework, French and Spanish, a few pleasures, balls and dancing, festas in which they only looked on, and marriage, seemed narrow. A curious discontent stirred within her, a kind of awakening that she longed for and dreaded. Did ever a young girl before want things and not know what they were?

Mrs. Murch came the next morning. She had a rather faded gingham gown, and a white kerchief about her shoulders. Now they could see a striking difference between her and most of the women they met. She had none of the languorous softness of the South. She had not even that sort of repressed dignity that characterized Barbe. Her complexion was fair; now her skin seemed full of minute blue veins that gave it a striking pallor. Her hair was brown and worn smoothly, not indebted to the hair-dresser's art or ideas. Her face was thin and long, her features rather aquiline, her voice smooth, low, but rather weak. She was not at all effusive, though one could see the gratitude in her eyes.

Before her marriage she had been a school-teacher in an Eastern town. Everything was so different here, she admitted. A few accomplishments and the catechism seemed all that was necessary. "But at the East you learned about countries, products, what people had done, what they were doing, the principles of government,

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the true purposes of religion, the advancement of humanity."

"But are women never laughed at? There was the Hotel Rambouillet and La Precieuses in Paris——"

Yes. Mrs. Murch knew about them. And kings and queens and wars and conquests.

"But that is not learning English," said Mrs. Murch, with a faint smile. "I have brought a primer with me. Have you any books?"

Gervaise had left one of his.

Sylvie was delighted and eager. She too was a little tired of the round, of Laure's inconsequent complaining, of Hortense's passionate adoration. As for Zenobie, she held her head loftily these days. And the crane appeared to have reached the limit of his educational faculties. Hylas alone never wearied her.

Mrs. Murch was to come three days in a week. The salary seemed much too high for the services she declared. Angelique thought it rather meagre, but their own income was not large. Barbe was quite stiff at first, but she soon became interested in the poor woman, who must at one time have been such a lady. They could hardly understand how a person of so much refinement could cheerfully consent to take up menial employments even in her own home.

Hylas approved of her. He was rather aristocratic too. And when one Sunday the boys were allowed to come up and renew acquaintance with him, they were wild with delight. Anthon had once carried Mr. Norton's valise for him, though the little negroes or big ones either, generally took such jobs as their share. Dick was younger; both were blue-eyed and sunburned, even as to hair. No one knew what their mother suffered when they started off in their shrunken white suits, and bare-

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footed ; still they were clean and merry, and thought New Orleans a marvellous place.

"But we're sure to go back," said Anthon, decidedly. "I shouldn't want to live here always unless I could have a garden and a house like this."

"I never saw such a funny crane," laughed Dick. "I've seen performing dogs, and I think you could teach Hylas anything, only he is so fine and grand you would hate to see him do ridiculous things! Think of his trying to dance like Telano!" and the boy laughed heartily.

The conversation was carried on in a rather funny manner. The boys had picked up a good deal of French and Spanish, but when they talked in real earnest they ran off on a siding which was English. Sylvie had to question and puzzle her brain, then they would all laugh at the misunderstandings.

"It's been splendid!" declared Sylvie, breathlessly. "I like boys better than girls. They have so many things to talk about. And they are not so silly. Then they do not keep telling you——"

Sylvie paused suddenly and turned scarlet.

"How to behave?" inquired Angelique, mirthfully. "And all your little faults?"

Sylvie was about to say, "How beautiful and how dear you are!" For Hortense had begun to weary her with "*mère ange!* My little heart! My sweetest flower; my star of light, I love you!" And yet as the boys were going away, Dick looked her straight in the face and exclaimed, with the candor of one not yet in his teens:

"I never saw any one as beautiful as you, Miss Sylvie. You look like an angel with all that golden hair and your eyes just the color of heaven."

So the little girl locked that up with her other secrets. It had not even called a blush to her cheek.

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Hylas had enjoyed the boys wonderfully, too. He had run races with them, being compelled by his wilful mistress to give them long odds and then distance them in the end. They had rolled and tumbled about until the white suits were almost the color of the dog. He had found articles hidden away, he had brought sticks, and if he could not dance, the supple curves of his long lithe body and slim legs were splendid.

Sylvie was tired and swung in the hammock. Hylas went over to Angelique, who sat puzzling over some words in the barbarous language that sounded so strong and forceful as the boys uttered the ringing sentences.

"Why do you look at me so," she asked, with a kind of sweet indignation. "It is as if you knew—everything!"

Yes, it was as if he said, "Do you remember my master? Wherever he goes he carries about with him your image. He never forgets you any more than I forget him."

Then she kept her eyes fixed steadily on her book.

So they studied and blundered and laughed and listened to Mrs. Murch's stories about girls at the East, and books and wonderful lives of dead and gone people that were fast spoiling them for the dreamy, languid life and the chatter about lovers to come, and settlements for the future. Letters too from Gervaise. They had found some tidings of Hugh. He had been in several Indian skirmishes, wounded in one and carried off a prisoner, nursed by an old Indian woman in a solitary wigwam.

Some one had found it later on burned to the ground. It was said a friend had taken the sick man to the South. And there all trace of him stopped. They were going on to the eastward, would visit some of the larger cities and see the President of this great, new nation. "Oh,"

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Gervaise wrote, "I do not wonder Norton is an enthusiastic American. The wonderful achievements are almost enough to turn one's brain."

And now autumn was coming on with its greater richness of foliage, its luscious fruits, its gorgeous flowers, its sunsets full of splendor, the soft languor giving way to a kind of briskness even in pleasure.

One day Claire Fleurien surprised them by a visit. Eugene had come down to see some sugar-buyers, Claire for a visit home, and they were to bring back Angelique and the little Sylvie.

"But she is no longer little," in amaze. "Papa Fleurien held Félice on his knee and told her baby stories, but, *merci!* Sylvie is a big girl. And now you will be in season to see the sugar-making. There is so much on a big plantation. Ours is large, but M. Poydras's is like a little town, only not gay with balls and cafés and balconies full of pretty, gayly dressed women. Ah, New Orleans is charming, and I shall come down when the holidays set in for a visit. Eugene and I—papa has consented, and we shall dance and be merry to our heart's content."

Claire was a little rounder and rosier and suggested her mother, so fresh and vivacious that she made one's blood start with enjoyment and hope.

To make a visit on a big plantation and to stay at the sugar-making! They had gone out to Monsieur de Boré's for a day at a time, but this would be quite different. And Claire with all her brightness!

"If I could only take Hylas and Telano," sighed Sylvie. "Nothing is ever quite perfect."

Telano had spent many sad hours since the advent of Hylas.

"It is queer," Sylvie had complained a little to Barbe,

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"that if there are two to care for you, one is always jealous. Hortense adores Zenobie herself, but she does not want me to like her very much, and Zenobie always flings out about Hortense, and can't see why I should care for her. And then she accuses me of a penchant for poor Laure, who has no one to love her. Not that Laure is really lovable, but one feels sorry for her. Madame Milhet is good in a duty way, but Laure is soon going to live in the convent."

"The best place for her, since she has no people."

"And if I had none, would I have been put in a convent, Barbe?"

"God forbid!" Barbe embraced her fondly. "Though the Sisters are good to the poor and the orphans and the friendless, and try to civilize the little Indians. There must be good in any belief that leads you to worship God and be upright and honest and love your neighbor. Perhaps all cannot believe alike."

Barbe sighed a little. She had grown broader in this new country.

"So I cannot take you, Hylas," Sylvie said to the dog, who listened with sorrowful eyes. "But the little Murch boys shall come up on Sunday; they are so fond of you, and you can have a good romp with them. If you only could understand Telano you might condole with each other, for he will miss me still more than you. Jaques is so fond of you, and Father Antoine when he comes over, while no one but Viny can sympathize with poor Telano."

Hylas understood it all, but his answer had a plaint in it, and he put his nose in Sylvie's small hand, while his eyes were sorrowful.

"And M'sieu Norton doesn't forget you either."

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The whine had a sound of tender appreciation in it. The ears were erect, he looked as if he could fly.

Barbe at the last was quite unwilling to have the child go. She had never been separated from her. But Angélique had grown so staid and careful, and would see that no misfortune happened to her.

"Why, I'm not a baby any longer," laughed Sylvie. "Jaques finds me heavy when he carries me over marshy places, and even Viny says I am a load to lift. Before very long I shall be twelve years old."

CHAPTER XV.

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UP the river they went in the brilliant morning sunshine. They had been down around the lakes, clear down to the curious wide-spreading delta, with its tortuous channels, its low swampy lands green with the luxuriance of tropical growths and often brilliant with strange flowers, as well as all manner of animal life that made the child shudder and shut her eyes. They had been up a short distance sailing, but since Gervaise had gone and Henri had been taken into his father's counting-house, pleasures of this kind had been restricted.

The yellow mud banks were cut into by crevasses that still swept and swirled and made picturesque whirlpools, then washed out to the channel as if suddenly possessed by some superior ambition to reach the Gulf. Great inroads had been made here and there, whole slices torn away and a bay formed.

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"It was here in one of the hurricanes that Monsieur d'Arvil's house was swept away," said Claire. "The river had eaten into the bank and he had been warned, but the house stood on a little bluff. He had gone down to the city on business when the storm came up. It was terrific! All the sky in the blackness of the deepest night, when not even a star is out! And such a rush of wind that nothing could live in it. There were his wife and his three little children, and his mother. One could not hear in the crashing of the storm that uprooted trees and howled like a demon. The slaves left their quarters for very terror and huddled about their mistress. And suddenly there was a great roar and crash and the house went over into the river. A few of the slaves escaped. Monsieur d'Arvil went crazy over the loss."

"Oh, how terrible!" cried Angelique.

It was now a little arm of the river with muddy banks and slimy growths, with wild fowl drowsing in the nooks. Snakes squirmed and rose to the surface, dodged again, and from the hoary trees left, some blackened by lightning, swung long filmy veils of moss that one could almost take for a procession of ghosts. Back of this the sun gilded the tops of the wide stretch of woods, and all about was bewildering light and color.

Here and there was a large rambling planter's house, a dock with a few boats being loaded or lying idly at anchor; great fields and plantations as far as the eye could reach. Settlements that were to be busy little towns later on; a river tranquil, almost lonely now, for it was hardly time for the small rush of freight they called business then.

They sat under the wide awning that protected them from the heat of the sunshine. Claire had a piece of lace-work, and gossiped in her soft, purling voice. Angelique

hardly knew whether she listened or not, it was so strange and captivating. A bit of Latin she had read with Gervaise came into her mind—something about a voyager and sirens tempting him to rest on charmed shores. Would they come out of these beautiful woods if one waited long enough? And those other earlier explorers and voyagers, how did it look to them when they saw it for the first time? Oh, where did it begin up in that wild and wonderful northland?

A canoe of Indians passed them, some flat-bottomed boats loaded with produce with which they exchanged greetings, some one coming down with all their worldly effects, emigrants, children running about, and now staring at their passing neighbor. Sylvie ran around, guarded by Nourette, Claire's maid, full of gay, wonderful surprise, chattering in French and limited Spanish, with now and then a word of her recently acquired English.

It was slow travelling in those days, though some improvements had been made. Yet these people had not been smitten with the rush of haste, nor impressed with the preciousness of time that leads to new inventions. They were still to a degree idyllic.

When they came up to the wharf there were the plantation wagons, clumsy enough with their bevy of slaves, to unload and load again. And there was Claire's team of pretty white mules beautifully kept as if to emphasize the difference between white and black or the many shades of brown.

"Papa! papa! Ah, have you been lonely all this long while? I sent a prayer night and morning. And I am so loaded with remembrances that it will take a week to give them all to you. It has been, oh, just delicious! but I am glad to come back to you."

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The small elderly man kissed his blooming daughter on both cheeks. She was glad to get back to him. That brightened all the hours of loneliness as if the sun had suddenly shone in a cave.

And here was Mademoiselle Saucier.

There ensued a pretty, courtly greeting. He raised the soft young hand to his lips. People were polite in those days.

"Ah, Bébé," to Claire, "you promised a little girl," as he studied Sylvie half in disappointment.

"No I am not a little girl any more," said Sylvie, with an enchanting smile. "I was when we came from France."

"Ah, pretty blossom, so was I little, just eight years old. It is long ago. I have thought to go back, but why—when old friends have passed elsewhere?"

"I do not want to go back," returned Sylvie. "I like the river better; you can see the banks and the trees are almost like people, but the ocean is so wide and dreary. And the pirates!"

"Ah, yes, my child!" smiling. "But thou wilt be proud to tell thy grandchildren. A little girl from old France, La Belle France! Mademoiselle," to Angelique, "thou at least must remember a good deal?"

"She saw the poor King and Queen that they put to death," exclaimed Sylvie. "But I only knew De Brienne and Dessiers. I like this better because there are so many more people."

Monsieur Fleurien smiled and nodded as a tall slave assisted them in. He and his son went in another vehicle.

Angelique thought the Lavalettes' a spacious old house, but it seemed as if to this there was no end. On to the somewhat massive brick cottage had been added ells and

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wings, some of them but one story, with curious peaked roofs where little windows hung out, enlarged by a gallery. The main part had a great projecting roof that was like a hood. On one side a large garden, with a hedge of wild orange and flower-beds of every conceivable shape, now abloom with the fierce colors of autumn, instead of the delicate shades of spring. And farther on great magnolias, palms, oaks, stretching out indeed to a protecting forest. In the front were vistas of the river, then above plantations of cane that appeared endless.

Within it was plain. Some of the floors were tiled, a few polished, but most of them scrubbed to a delightful whiteness, one might almost say fragrance, for all the air was sweet. Massive pieces of furniture stood widely apart with no graceful little articles of prettiness to break the stiff look. Only here and there a great jar of flowers or tropical grasses waving feathery fronds when the wind blew through the open windows.

It was on so large a scale that it seemed a world by itself, Angelique thought. And truly it was, several worlds. Claire's apartments with some modern furnishings wore one aspect. Her windows overlooked the garden. The living part was gloomy, undeniably so. Then adjoining were Monsieur Fleurien's rooms. Sitting, sleeping chamber, office where all complaints were heard and business transacted; another for accounts, the keeping of books and all private matters. Still another where the slaves came, were called to account, and sentenced to punishment, or listened to when sorrows and trouble were their portion. In one way a strict hand was kept over them, in another it was the idyllic period of slavery, and this master was a friend.

The cane fields stood in magnificent maturity. It had

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been a fine season. The long green leaves curling and waving luxuriantly when the breeze touched them; the great stalks, yielding to the stroke of the sharp cane knife, fell in rows like ranks of soldiers swept down. There was a subtle activity everywhere. Great masculine, heavy-limbed negroes, the lithe younger ones with their sinuous bodies, the water-carriers with graceful, alert movements occasionally dodging a rough and not ill-natured blow, the monotonous singing that kept time to the labor, the evenings when the gangs returned home with their mules and wagons and tools, men and women with sudden hilarity welcoming the coming night as something that belonged to them.

Down the long rows of negro cabins there was a cheerful sound and savory smell of coming supper. Nearly naked babies, black and shining, tumbled about, played, quarrelled, screamed with blows showered upon them or made the place ring with merriment.

"There are so many of them!" cried Sylvie, in amazement. "I should think you would have to count them!"

Papa Fleurien laughed. His teeth were still sound and white, and his lips red as if with the fires of youth.

"Yes, we do, when the New Year comes in. Ah, that is a grand time, a holiday. But it is not sugar-making all the year round. And here there are only four or five hundred. Ah, you should see my neighbor, M. Poydras. There is a man for you! Seven hundred perhaps to feed and clothe and watch and make work, for, look you, they are lazy. It was born in them ages ago."

"They did not have to work in their own land."

M. Fleurien shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, that is a grand mistake. They were made slaves even there. They had to fight for their masters. They were killed by scores when their chief died. Some

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were buried alive even. They were made to draw heavy loads, for there were no other beasts of burden. They were worse than the Indians. And here they have good homes. If it is a bad season they do not starve. And they have much enjoyment in their way. We cannot all be alike!"

Sylvie laughed. "Oh, it is the difference that makes the world so entertaining. Now, I should not like to be a nun and always wear the same kind of gown and coif, and talk in the same low tone, and always take the same little walks and sleep in the same cell and have no journeys——"

"Thou surely art not meant for a nun." He studied the bright dimpled face and the heavenly blue eyes. "Thou art born to make some man's heart glad and perhaps give an ache to others. But the nuns are very good. They have the vocation of God, who puts it in their hearts."

If there were not so many books to read in those days, there were reminiscences that have been the starting-point of histories and tales. And nothing pleased Monsieur Fleurien better than to sit with his family around him when the day with its work was ended, for it was really ended at that period, and talk over the times when he was young. He was past sixty now and had not married until after thirty. He and his father had come to New Orleans under the old French government, and expected to make a fortune in indigo. He too remembered when the patriot Lafrénière had harangued the planters and townsmen, and exhorted them to strike for liberty, and failed, as so many early struggles have. And then there had been barely three thousand souls in all the province. And he had fought under Galvez when the British were planning to take New Orleans.

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"Oh, were you really a soldier?" cried Sylvie, her eyes alight with enthusiasm. This small man with his delicate wrinkled face! For to her it seemed as if all soldiers should be tall and strong and youthful.

"Ah, yes. And though we did not love Spain, we hated England, and we fought for our homes, or at least the land we claimed. We remembered how England had driven out the Acadians, and perhaps she might drive us away too. Ah, he was a brave young fellow and one can't help honoring him for all his Spanish blood. There was Manchac and Baton Rouge, and the Acadians had a chance to strike back, which they did bravely. And the next year he took Fort Charlotte on the Mobile. After that I came home with a wound. But he and General Miro went on until they had conquered the whole of West Florida. We came up in this wild land and traded and raised myrtle wax, and made poor brown sugar until Monsieur de Boré turned it white with his magic knowledge. And there was Monseieur Poydras trading up and down the river, and now it is cotton and sugar-cane."

Besides the facts was wonderful legendary lore such as is handed down from father to son, or from some old *gra'mère* to youthful generations. Charms such as girls use, and tragic tales growing out of them.

Sylvie would sit beside him and listen, a fascinated auditor. Her slim hand would rest on his knee, sometimes to be clasped by his, which was still soft. It was delightful to have a new listener.

"But were they really charms?" the child queried. "Could they wish for things and have them come to pass? And did they hear their lovers' names truly called on St. John's night?"

"They thought so. There was an old slave woman

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that was devoted to my papa who had a curious amulet. She herself had come from Africa. She had only to rub it and wish for some one and he was sure to come. She had a lover, and one night she wanted to go to a dance; so she wished for him. But the drawback was that the person you wished for must never be across water. The poor lover was, and in trying to cross the river he was drowned."

"Oh, how could she have forgotten!"

"She might not have known where he was," said Angelique.

"But the amulet, what did she do with that?" questioned Sylvie, eagerly.

Monsieur Fleurien smiled a little.

"I wanted her to give it to me, but one day she went out and dropped it in the river. And shortly afterward she died."

"And there is the story of the ring that makes one invisible, and ever so many legends."

"I wish I had it," said Sylvie, eagerly. "I would wish at once for Gervaise. It is getting to be very lonesome without him."

"But he might be across water."

"Oh, dear! Why, you couldn't always be certain."

"There are so many superstitions among the slaves," said Claire. "And some really horrible Voudoux things. Then there are the children born with a caul or a thin membrane over the head and face. The child can see into futurity and tell fortunes."

"And a sea captain will sometimes pay a big price for the caul," exclaimed M. Fleurien, "as he thinks no bad luck will happen to him while it is on board. So the superstitions are not all confined to the blacks."

"And all the foolish signs the girls have in the convent,"

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laughed Claire. "But I wore a yellow garter and found a lover," she added, triumphantly. "And we used to cut our nails on Monday morning before breakfast to get a present."

"And did you get the present?" asked Sylvie, all interest.

"Well, we often forgot to do it, eager as we were for the present. Yes, we surely did sometimes."

"And the old women in the city who sell love powders and charms!"

"All nations have much the same superstitions," said the host with his good night. "Little one, do not spend any time dreaming, but sleep sweetly."

There was the great red brick structure with its furnaces and chimneys, its long sheds where rows of hogsheads were like bristling fortifications. The new methods with the sacharometer and polariscope and other modern ideas had not come in yet. M. de Boré's methods led on to fortune in those days and were satisfactory. And the crowds of half-clad negroes looking weird enough in the atmosphere of steam, dipping from kettle to kettle until the overseer discerns the sparkling grains, and then the shout of triumph. Every day apparently the same anxiety, the same rejoicing.

Then came the message that Monsieur Poydras would be pleased to receive them. Eugene heroically insisted that his father should attend the ladies, as one of them must remain on the plantation for authority.

The slaves rowed them down, keeping time with musical notes that had no real words to them, only sounds. And there was their host to receive them. At this period he was about sixty, tall and still finely formed, like a man in the prime of life, and attired in the quaint French costume he never changed. A pleasing

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face, rather grave, but a most kindly, cheerful voice, and he gave the visitors a cordial greeting, for every one was welcome when he was at home.

In this simple, unostentatious house and fashion lived one of the wealthiest men of his time, leading a most kindly and beneficent life, beloved by all who had ever dealt with him, and adored by his slaves. Wife and children were not among his earthly possessions; yet in his earlier days, when he had gone from plantation to plantation with his wares, children had run to greet him, and mothers had been delighted to receive him as a welcome guest. And now society paid him all the honor he would accept, and although he did not mingle largely in it, he was no recluse. Indeed, later on, when he had reached the age of seventy, he was elected a delegate to Congress from the Territory of Orleans, and took the long journey on horseback with a favorite servant.

He also had a love for the accomplishments of the time. He was a fine performer on the old-fashioned lyre, and sang his own songs, often the heroic deeds of the early explorers, and found time to write poetry. If it was a little pompous and stilted, that was the tenor of the time, in which heroes were likened to those of mythology.

He remembered at once that he had seen Mam'selle Saucier and the little one at one of the entertainments of the exiled Princes and greeted them with pleasure.

"I remarked your perfect accent," he said. "We get our language so mixed up that it is a delight to hear one's native tongue in its early elegance. For one can never quite resign the country of his childhood. It is still my dream to visit it again, though I have much affection for the land of my adoption, yet I hope to see it some day. Little one, why dost thou look incredulous?"

"Are you not afraid of the big ocean?"

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He smiled. "Why our river has nearly as much terror in its bosom. It is sleepy enough in these tranquil times, but in its stormy fury quite a giant. Hardly a year but some place is swept away. More than once the city has been inundated. Some day, perhaps, there will be sufficient wisdom to protect us and to manage it. Ah, how magnificent it must have looked to those early travellers with its great reaches of unbroken forests, its myriads of birds, its beautiful creatures that were wild yet not afraid, the glow and brilliance of its sunrise and sunset. From St. Louis down to the Gulf, and then across the Gulf—it is all a marvellous country! Yet one dreams occasionally of the other far side—but one would not wish to see the storm and terror that have fallen upon it."

The grave eyes had so much soul in them that Angelique felt he was a poet, though her intellectual knowledge was extremely limited.

"I am so glad we came away," said Sylvie proudly. "And I do not mean ever to go back. I do not know but two or three people in all France, and they may be dead; but there are so many delightful folks here, and it is so amusing to go down in the town and see all the strange sights and the little black children tumbling about ready to make any funny antics for you if you only smile on them. And every flower-covered house, almost it seems like a great garden."

"Ah, what a happy light youth lends! Child, keep these eyes that can see so much joy as long as you can."

"I shall keep them always." She raised them in their azure softness. "I want to be merry and glad all the days of my life."

"I think thou wilt be."

She was like a bird darting hither and thither. Claire was vivacious as well, and was quite at home in the old

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house. Angelique was delighted to visit the sort of study where the master spent his hours of recreation. Here indeed was quite a library picked up at various times and places, and the young girl remarked some old friends among them.

"You see I was so much with my cousin the last year in France," she said, half in apology for knowing them. "And he was fresh from school. There were no girls, and the Marquise was ill most of the time. And now we have been learning Spanish and a little English, and I have time to read and think."

"But forget not a woman's true sphere," he suggested gently. "That is the best and happiest destiny."

The dinner was at the old-time noon hour. The host insisted that Madame Fleurien should grace the head of the table, which she did charmingly. Were there not some of his own that he could draw around his board and make a family circle, he wondered? For in the years to come when the cares of business would be less exacting, would it not be a pleasure to have some dear faces about him?

The cotton gin was quite a new thing in those days, and they must see that. Here was the other great sugar-making house, with its busy, happy laborers who had a cheerful smile for their master as he passed them. And until the day of his death, which was to be of ripe old age, they were devoted to him—a devotion he meant nobly to repay, but his last wishes were disregarded by the State he had served so well.

Sylvie was charmed with Pointe Coupée and Papa Fleurien, and he was loath to let her go.

"And now we must go to the last cutting," he declared one day. "You must not miss that."

It was quite a grand ceremony. When they came to

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the last row the tallest cane was chosen and left uncut, while the green forest fell all about it. After it was carried in, the gang came out to the place with the overseer and *commandeur*, one of the head negroes, who tied a blue ribbon to the cane, sang to it and danced around it as an Indian might have done, and suddenly cut it down with a shout. The work was ended. Mounting a cart, it was borne aloft in triumph amid singing and shouting, the women waving bright handkerchiefs, and carried to the great house, where the master accepted it with a speech. Then they were treated and the day ended with a dance in one of the cleared spaces where pine torches could be lighted with no danger of firing anything.

"Why, it is like a picture!" cried Sylvie, enthusiastically. "If only Monsieur Poydras could paint it!"

"Or put it in verse," said Papa Fleurien.

"It is quite delightful to have a friend so near one's age," said Claire. "I shall miss thee sorely. Zenobie is so full of girl's whims and pranks and does not enjoy our quiet. Still, Angelique," caressing her tenderly, "thou art too sweet to comb St. Catharine's hair. Some husband must have the gift of thy devotion."

Angelique blushed. What was it that held her back from dreams of marriage and home?

Barbe and Jaques gave them a most fervent welcome. Viny went wild with delight.

"It has been like a convent for stillness, Missy," she cried. "And Telano has nearly died of grief."

"Oh, my poor fellow!" But Hylas would have the first attention and looked unutterable confessions with his eager eyes. Telano put his head in his mistress's hand and gave a pathetic cry.

"Oh, Telano, I've had such a splendid time, but it was dreadful to leave you so long. Hylas had the boys, but,

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my poor bird, you had no one, though I know Viny was good to you. And now I shall not go in ever so long again, and we will have good times together. Oh, you must not grieve so, now that you have me back again. We will sit by the lake and you shall hear about the sugar-making. And the deers are lovely and tame, and such beautiful peacocks! But you are my heart's delight, you know so much, Telano."

CHAPTER XVI.

A LONELY LITTLE GIRL.

CHRISTMAS was a church day, rather solemn in the morning, toned down by Advent, which was quite devoutly kept. But New Year's was the great festival. Before it was fairly light the slaves were swarming out of their cabins to the great house, to awaken the master and mistress, and the first one to greet them was envied all the year. Then began gift-giving. New suits of clothes, gay kerchiefs for the women, and the mother of a new baby always had something extra. On the plantations they always formed for a dance, interspersed with songs. In the city the dance had been forbidden, but there was often a beautiful song or two, accompanied by the plaintive sound of the rude home-manufactured violin.

The rest of the day was given over to jollity. True, many of the slaves paid for too much vehemence in the calaboose. But it was their one grand holiday. Servants were hired out, slaves took to themselves wives, and for a week there was more or less commotion. Indeed, the

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lower class of whites and the half-breeds were more disorderly than the negroes. Drinking brawls, gaming, and disreputable balls raged like a carnival. Then everybody settled to the old routine.

There was a rather sharp winter after that, and the older people recalled their stories of snow and the big freeze when the fruit was blighted. And once the river was frozen over.

"How curious it must have seemed!" commented Sylvie. "I should like to see snow."

Fires in the wide chimneys felt good. The child sat in the glow with Hylas by her side and dreamed all manner of strange things as one does on the dividing line when one longs for something new and yet is almost afraid of that unknown land called the future.

When Gervaise came home! He was having a wonderful time journeying about. None of it could be told in a letter. It would take all one's time. But there seemed a great deal of space devoted to Monsieur Norton, and mysterious allusions to some great future happening. The Union of the colonies was so much grander than one could imagine. In the new capital, which was for the whole country, a splendid body of men came to represent every State and present its needs. He had seen the President, Monsieur Adams, but the grand general who had led the armies to victory and snatched his country from foreign domination, giving it the larger liberty, and again served it as President, had died in his beautiful country home, whither he had retired to spend his old age. The whole country had mourned him.

Once they had quite given up the search for Cousin Hugh, as the fact of his death seemed to be established. And then M. Norton had found another clue. They were to come back by an overland journey which would

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bring them to the place indicated, but if they did succeed it would be owing to M. Norton's perseverance and knowledge of the country.

"Do you hear that?" Sylvie said to Hylas. "Your dear master may find our Cousin Hugh, and we shall all be so glad."

Public events to change the destiny of the whole Province of Louisiana had been marching on rapidly. Governor Gayoso had died in the midst of an intrigue with Wilkinson and his party. The Marquis Caso Calvo proving weak had been succeeded by Don Manuel de Salcedo. But the intendant Morales held the real power and hampered American commerce, as well as discouraging emigration. The *Moniteur de Louisiane* was the only paper, and being published in French, and having French interests at heart, was not likely to disseminate much American news. True, there had been an undercurrent of feeling that the province had been transferred back to France, and yet there was terror as well as exultation in it. For had not the redoubtable First Consul, who was fast making himself the arbiter of Europe, said to the St. Domingans, "Whatever be your color or your origin, you are free"? What if this should be his fiat to them!

They heard little about the political aspect of matters in the quiet home on the St. John Road. Father Antoine no longer worked the small plantation, and Jaques had two hired slaves. Zenobie and Hortense had so far outstripped Sylvie that they were young ladies going to balls, and having whispered confidences about a "parti." Zenobie held her head high and coquetted even under the careful eyes of her mother; Claire was wildly happy in the possession of twin boys; and gra'mère still lived, thanks to the devotion of Olympie. Mrs. Murch and her two boys had followed her husband to Kentucky,

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where he had succeeded in obtaining a farm and building a log cabin.

"I don't know what I should do without you, Hylas," Sylvie said a dozen times a day, in a most melancholy tone. "I don't believe any one will ever come back to us! And Angel does nothing but pore over those stupid books, while Hortense, with all her protestations, has ceased to care for me, and Laure is really going to be a nun!"

In the midst of these lamentations the young traveller returned.

Was this indeed Gervaise? He was taller and more manly, and so changed that Barbe declared she would never have known him. Angelique was proud of him. Sylvie, half afraid, was stunned by the complete alteration in him. She could not run to him and hang on his arm, or order him about with her pretty imperiousness. She did not understand how much of the change was in herself.

Oh, one could never have written half the wonderful things he had to relate! Angelique asked herself seriously if it could be true. Sylvie listened enraptured. There were a few old French stories of the simpler sort that girls were allowed to read, but this surpassed them all. No Arabian Nights was ever so marvellous as these cities of the East, where little girls went to school quite alone by themselves and had no end of pretty plays.

Two days after Gervaise's return there was a great commotion in old New Orleans. The cession that had been suspected and denied, and kept a secret from those most interested, was suddenly announced. The First Consul had exchanged the petty Italian kingdom of Etruria for this magnificent province. On the 26th of March, 1803, M. Laussat, the French Colonial Prefect, landed, commissioned to prepare for the advent of General

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Victor with a large body of troops to institute the new form of government.

There was much indignation and wonderment that this cession had been kept a secret so long, and certainly the Louisianians had been cheapened by the bargain. Laussat, to allay their fears about the slaves, proclaimed the good-will and friendship of Napoleon, and that it was his intention to preserve the colony in all its rights and privileges, amending only such abuses as might have crept in.

Yet it was not easy to satisfy the inhabitants at first. They could not understand all the diplomacy back of it. For Napoleon at war with England saw this was a vulnerable point to strike. Their ships of war were already in the Gulf of Mexico. And he understood the desire of the United States to possess it. There had been more than one conference in the garden of St. Cloud with Marbois and Talleyrand. President Adams was ready to descend upon it. There was the other counter-plotting. And he needed money to prosecute his war.

"Let them give you one hundred million francs, pay their own claims, and take the country," he said to M. Marbois, who had the negotiations in hand, with Messrs. Livingston and Monroe.

And while the dickering was going on, New Orleans was coming to believe herself really French once more, and beginning to rejoice in the fact of their reunion to France, which they had always desired. The enthusiasm grew. The French language was used without stint and openly taught. Many restrictions were honored in the breach.

Gervaise Aubreton wondered if he really was a Frenchman! He had seen no more beautiful country than this, yet his soul had been fired with the larger liberty of the

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Republic. The narrowness and illiberal policy that had so retarded the growth of the city struck him as never before; indeed, he had not considered it at all in that old boyish time.

Old friends welcomed him. Henri de Longpré, grown the same as himself, but now an active business person, contemplating marriage and casting his eyes toward Zenobie Lavalette, was enthusiastic over his return. Madame Henriade, looking not a day older, still had her pretty apartments thronged with visitors and gave him a delightful welcome.

"Truly you have come to full manhood, *mon ami*," she said with her charming smile. "You are quite in condition to captivate our poor girls, and they must be warned as to your attractions. And you have seen so much of the world, learned that some of the finest plans go astray."

He studied her a moment, compelling his eyes to betray more curiosity than knowledge.

"Yes—they did not succeed——"

"General Villaineuve was deeply disappointed. It would have been a magnificent empire."

"But to whom would it have belonged? It was never really meant for Spain."

"Ah bah! Spain! And though there is no royal blood in this Napoleon, if he gives us a good government we will not quarrel with him. But a truce to these things women have no right to meddle with. *Mon ami*, what do you mean to do with your pretty cousin? She will have no lovers. Was there some one left behind in France?"

"Angelique, do you mean? Oh, no. No one ever came to the château——" then he flushed a little, why

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he could not exactly tell, though he had more than half suspected Norton's secret.

"Youth goes so fast—a girl's sweet youth that it is a pity not to make the best of it. And you Protestants have no convents where one may make single life a virtue."

Gervaise found Angelique curiously interesting. She was more like the women he had met in the Eastern cities, where education was making progress. True, they had studied not a little together and her mind was not full of childish frivolities, nor her eyes of the demureness that was half coquetry, yet indescribably attractive. And she was eager to hear about his journeys and the people he had met.

But poor Sylvie felt herself crowded out of all this. She was not old enough to appreciate any of the larger views of life, and she was growing out of childishness. Indeed, a little girl's life outside of the convent or the schools was rather dull at this period. As Barbe complained, there were slaves to do almost everything, even to fine sewing, and, alas! Sylvie did not like to sew. She soiled her lace-work and had stitches too tight or too loose. Barbe had tried her at darning stockings, but Viny did it so much neater and often begged off for the child, or mended them when they were hardly dry from the wash.

So she roamed in the old garden filling it with her complaints. She stood under the great tall stalks of lilies, snowy-white, purple-clouded, and scarlet, and reaching up to them kissed the white ones, for the others gave her a strange fear, as if they might be transformed into something she should shrink from. She buried her face in the roses and showered the leaves all over her; she patted

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and caressed the magnolias with her soft, slender fingers. Or she hid under the dark tall pines, whose thick boughs seemed instinct with some mysterious whispering. She might have been a later *Ænone* in the vale of *Ida*, for surely this beautiful spot was perfect enough, fragrant enough, and full of all enchanting voices that impressed her and yet she was unable to translate. For she was no Greek girl dwelling among naiads and dryads by melodious fountains, where the gods could come and hold converse with her. For if they did, they were birds calling mysteriously, warbling their sweetest notes to each other, making a dazzle in the sunshine or a flutter among the leaves and vanishing. The swans talked to their young, the ducks chattered and clattered in friendly rivalry.

"And no one cares about me any more. They do not love me. Gervaise does not, for all I am to be his little wife so soon, when I am twelve. But he loves *Angelique*, I know. It is just like the birds. If she goes out on the gallery he follows. And when I come they stop talking, or they go somewhere else. And even *Barbe* is cross, and says, 'Run away, *Sylvie*,' or 'Run out in the garden.' Oh *Telano*, it is very hard not to have any one love you best of all, only one slave girl who doesn't belong to you!"

Telano made a lugubrious sound and thrust his head under his young mistress's arm. *Hylas* stood before her, wide-eyed and upbraiding.

"Oh, I know what you mean, *Hylas*, but it isn't so; you would fly in a moment if your master was here. Do you know that he is coming—*M'sieu Norton*—*Roger Norton*," in a slow, beguiling tone.

Hylas gave a turn as if he could fly to the ends of the earth, and uttered two short exultant cries as if he said,

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"When? when?" His ears were all aquiver, his nostrils dilated with very eagerness, and a tiny pulsation seemed to ripple all over his body. Oh, the intense earnestness of his eyes as he studied the fair face!

"Oh, yes, I knew it would be so! And when you hear his voice you will go wild with delight. You will forget all about me. He will take you away, and you won't mind, you will be so happy. And there will be only Telano. Then what if Telano should die!"

The soft, fragrant wind was gay rather than mournful; the leaves danced about, the birds fairly shouted out melody. Yes, it was very hard for a little girl who had no resources, for whom there were no fairy tales of enchanting transformations, no charming history of grand and noble deeds, no novels such as fire a young girl's life and make her long for days of usefulness, of ambition, of satisfaction!

Ah, no wonder Sylvie was lonely in the great beautiful garden, for a human soul is always longing for humanity. What a little of true childhood the world knew then, a hundred years ago!

Gervaise came in with a note and a shout. He whirled the letter round and round his head. "He has been found! He is alive! He is coming, they are coming as fast as they can!"

"Oh, it can't be true," cried Barbe, clasping her hands. "He would have taken some pains all this time to find us. You would have heard——"

"The old Indian woman who nursed him took him away. Some one said she had buried him in the forest. Then we heard of him at one of the forts—just the same name—Hugh de Brienne. But we went to Pittsburg and then on east; and all trace was lost. Yet once or twice, even, we found we had been on the wrong trail. And how would he hear about us?"

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For while Barbe considered him dead—as in her secret heart this fear was uppermost—she forgave him many things that looked like neglect. She knew nothing of a man's life of adventure. Yet suddenly a hard feeling toward him sprang up as if she could call him to account severely.

"Norton does not go into particulars. There are always so many things to do, and so few—what shall I call them?—conveniences in that rough life. But Heaven only knows how glad I shall be. For, Barbe, since I have been back it has been desperately trying with the little one. And how we are ever to get out of the tangle—if Hugh were really dead, I suppose——"

"Hush," commanded Barbe, and, following the direction of her eyes, Gervaise saw Sylvie with her two companions.

"How vexatious!" he exclaimed, irritably.

"I wish some one would take a nice long walk with me," said the child. "I'm tired of the garden. It is so lonely and sorrowful."

"Let Viny take you down in the town——"

"I don't want to go in the town," pettishly.

"To-morrow we will go somewhere, anywhere you like. We will sail down on the lake."

"And now go up to Angelique and say a lesson or read. I want to talk to Gervaise."

Oh, that was the old story! No one wanted to talk to her. Her heart swelled with indignation. She went slowly with tears in her eyes.

Barbe took the young man's arm and led him out in the court.

"It is such a queer thing, such a wild thing it seems now. I can't understand. Did he really desire it, do you think? He was so much older. To be sure, there

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was all the fortune, but no one knows about it now. And if he should insist——”

“I hoped she would get over her fondness for me,” Gervaise said, with a sigh. “She is like a darling little sister, that is all. And the bond with Hugh is legal, I suppose, though no one kept the copy with the signatures. It may still be in the old château. Yes, as you say, it is a desperate tangle, and he can best unravel it. But if he should repudiate it?”

She turned her anxious eyes to his face, that was not any nearer satisfaction than her own.

“Oh, we can do nothing but wait. It will not be very long, thank Heaven! Why, Hugh coming back to us is like a miracle. But I suppose he is changed in every respect. I can recall my boyish adoration of him, and when he came to America I was crazy to come also. I chafed like a tiger when I was sent back to that dull little school. And now I keep saying, ‘Shall we like him or not?’ All adventurers are not noble or grand or lovable. I have learned that, Barbe.”

“I know so little of him!”

“But I was a boy under his wing, as one may say. He taught me to ride without fear, and to shoot. And he was always so brave and proud and abhorred lies. He thrashed me once because I was afraid to own up a truth, and then he caressed me afterward and was so affectionate. I should hate to have him changed.”

“Angelique should know. She has much wisdom in her girl’s head, Gervaise, and when the pinch comes she may see a clearer path than any of us.”

“Yes.” He started up the stone stairway. Then he bethought himself that they had sent Sylvie to Angelique, and slowly retraced his steps, turning into the garden. Hylas lay on the stone flag.

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"Hylas, old fellow, your master is coming home. Oh, how wild you will be, you faithful creature. And he would not take a duke's ransom for you!"

Hylas sprang up and bounded about with short, quick cries, as if he could hardly contain himself for joy.

"He really does understand!" Gervaise patted and stroked him. "Poor Sylvie will be jealous again. If she *could* understand, but she is too young."

In the midst of her English which she was rendering with many disheartening blunders, she heard the voice and the dog's joy, and her heart bled afresh.

"You are very careless, Sylvie. Now as a punishment you are to stay here and study half an hour. I shall go down in the garden."

Sylvie felt spiritless, heart-broken, and the big tears dropped slowly on her page.

Angelique Saucier wondered within herself how she could take the tidings so calmly. She remembered the day he had ridden away from the old château, bright, joyous, full of splendid hopes and enthusiasms. He had pressed a kiss upon her forehead and said, "Give me a place in thy prayers, sweet cousin, and let no one crowd me out." The words still sounded in her brain as he had uttered them then. But he had desired this marriage for the sake of the rich Du Chatilly heritage, and it had struck a hard blow to her young soul. What made her so cold and indifferent now?

"Poor little Sylvie," Gervaise said, pityingly. "Of course Hugh will have to decide what will be done. It was an unfortunate affair. But she is so young. And Angelique, think how queer some marriages are. I should want an unmistakable preference of my own, should you not? Oh, there was that young Spaniard——"

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She flushed and laughed. "Yet many of the marriages are happy. There is Claire Lavalette's."

"Oh, we must go up the river and see them all."

CHAPTER XVII.

HUGH DE BRIENNE.

LAURE GORGAS was walking up and down the shaded court with a baby in her arms. Its mother was dead, its father had taken a sea-trip, being a sailor, and the little one was left to the kindly care of the nuns, but a paid boarder at that. She was giving it the air, as it had not been very well. The soft baby face was pressed in the nest between chin and shoulder, and occasionally she kissed the tiny cheek or pressed the small fingers to her lips. Ah, Blessed Virgin, how sweet it was! And the poor mother lay in the grave! That made Laure shudder. She hated dying and graves and going-out of life. Monotonous as this life was, it was much better and pleasanter than to be out of it and in purgatory for one's sins. Were they all sins, these disquieting thoughts? Mother Annette never had them, she did her whole duty, that was all. Sister Lisa said no one had any business with such thoughts, it showed a depraved soul. Father Moras said she must keep busy, and the Evil One would not find so many places to plant his ungodly seed. Busy—why, she was busy all the time. She never took walks for pleasure any more. But she was glad to be the baby's nurse—it preferred her to all the rest, perhaps it loved her. She too had such a wicked human longing to be loved.

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Father Moras was out visiting the sick when a strange priest called. He had been there a full hour examining the convent and the chapel, and the Father had not yet come in. Mother Anastasia was ill in bed with a raging headache, and Sister Catharine had been taking him through. There was only a hedge of clipped spruce between the walks.

"Then you do not know——" he paused.

"There have been so many *émigrés*, Father Gilbert. And they would be likely to go to some of the heretical settlements."

"It was told me they were in the city. There was this young girl, Mademoiselle Saucier, but she may be married before this. Husbands seem easy to get in this new land. It is the child Sylvie Perrier who is needed. She and all she has were bequeathed to the Church. It is hunting a lost sheep."

"I will make inquiries, Father. Our good priest will be likely to know. Come in again."

He gave her his blessing.

Why, that was little Sylvie! And she, Laure, had been praying for her conversion. Bequeathed to the Church! Then she had no right to be a Huguenot, or any other "not" that disbelieved. Laure quickened her pace and came out at the end of the walk just as the priest reached his. He raised his hand in blessing.

"Pardon me, Father, but I accidentally caught something you said to Sister Catharine. You are looking for Sylvie Perrier?"

"Ah, yes. Do you know her?"

"Yes," answered the girl, rather hesitatingly. "And you said—she had been bequeathed to the Church?"

"That is true. It is my business to find her."

There was a little exultation in Laure's mind that she

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had a knowledge above Sister Catharine's, and that she could guide even a priest of the Church.

"We go around gathering up our stray lambs," he said, in a soft voice. "And whoever helps does a worthy deed. My child, where shall I find her?"

"I have prayed night and morning for her conversion to the true faith." Laure wanted credit for her good works.

"Thou art a little missionary then. Thou wilt make a devoted Sister. Take my blessing. And now—where shall I find these people. There is a Monsieur Aubreton, and—I have the names in a list; it escapes me at this moment."

"It is on the St. John Road. There are not many houses. This has a magnolia avenue, and two giant pines at the gateway."

"Thanks, thanks, my daughter," and the hands were folded over her head.

It was full time to go back with the baby. Sœur Catharine scolded because it had been kept out in the evening air, and said it must be fed and put to bed at once.

So Sylvie Perrier, with all her saucy pride and independence and her tendency to scoff at the Church, really belonged to it. She would be made to conform. And what if she had to be a nun! It would be good for some of these pleasure-loving girls who were always talking of balls and lovers when two or three of them had their heads together. The poor girls with no homes and no families, no dowries, yes, that was the proper place for them. But some of the more favored ones ought to be made to take up the cross. Why should only the gay, bright side be reserved for them?

Father Gilbert inquired again the next morning.

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Yes, the convent girl had been correct. Monsieur and Madame Champe! He smiled rather sardonically. What airs people put on in this new country! Gervaise Auberton—Angelique Saucier, Sylvie Perrier. And now it was a good thing this foolish marriage had taken place, though at first Père Mambert had protested against it. How astute he had been in the marriage agreement!

Marti answered the clang at the gate. Gervaise had put up a larger bell when he went away, so they could even hear it in the garden to summon Jaques. A priest in his long cassock stood there, and Marti bowed her head and crossed herself.

"I wish to see Madame Champe," he said, briefly. "And Mademoiselle Saucier."

The court down here was comfortable enough to receive any casual guest. Some of the rustic seats had cushions on them. How ease-loving these heretics were!

Madame Champe looked askance at the new-comer, who bowed formally. Angelique had followed her, and cried, "Oh, are you from Pointe Coupée. Is there—news?" She could not bring herself to say "bad news."

"I am not from Pointe Coupée, but from France—Paris."

The two women glanced at each other. What word was this? A sudden terror smote both.

"In the latter part of the year seventeen ninety-five, there was a marriage solemnized at the Château de Brienne at the command of the Marquise, who was dying," he said, in an assured tone.

Barbe made a half inclination of the head, hardly knowing whether to admit or not.

"Father Mambert of St. Eudor's officiated. The convent was near-by. The contracting parties were Sylvie Perrier, an orphan child, and Hugh de Brienne, the

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proxy being his cousin, Gervaise Aubreton," and he looked up confidently.

That was all true enough. She made no comment, but a shade of paleness passed over her countenance, for she apprehended trouble.

"I suppose the marriage contract was read by you all, since you all signed it?"

The tone had a suavity that was irritating.

"No. I am not sure the Marquise heard it even. And the strange thing about it was its disappearance. We never saw it after the signing," said Madame, decisively.

"It was given into the Father's care. The child-wife was to be under his protection, was indeed to reside at the convent until such time as her husband returned."

"I cannot believe that! Madame was not a Catholic," cried Barbe, indignantly.

"Allow me to refresh your memory." He drew from an inside pocket a roll of parchment tied up in a shabby velvet case, and began to unroll it. "A circumstance that might reasonably have been feared, has occurred, and as a wise precaution this was taken into account and provided for; therefore the law and the desires of the Marquise must go into effect. Let me read to you."

He adjusted his glasses and shook out the parchment, eying both women from under long drooping lids.

"You cannot deny the marriage?" he said, defiantly.

"I do not deny the marriage." Barbe's tone was cold and resentful and showed plainly that she would be glad to, if she could.

Then he began to read. There was much stilted verbiage, the fashion of that time which has come down to us. The relationships were duly traced on both sides. Sylvie, daughter of Armand Perrier of Liscourt, and

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Constance de Chatilly, heiress of Chatilly Court, of Petit Marais, of Saint Morne, wife of Armand Perrier, mother of Sylvie de Chatilly Perrier. Then followed the marriage contract, the delegation of all powers as guardian of the Marquise de Brienne to the Convent of St. Eudor; that the said Sylvie be educated and cared for; and if Hugh de Brienne should die, the whole fortune and the ward should remain in the hands of the Fathers and the Mother Superior."

"I do not believe it!" burst out Barbe, indignantly. "The Marquise was not a Catholic, the Perriers were all Huguenots! The Marquise never could have done such a wicked thing. It is false. We fled because we heard there was a plot——"

"You can examine for yourself. And now that the province has gone back to France you will find the same laws govern both places. We therefore demand this Sylvie Perrier. She must return to France, and I am invested with all legal authority to convoy her thither. I warn you that fighting will be useless. For Hugh de Brienne, the only other person who could claim her, is dead."

"He is not dead!" cried Angelique, vehemently. "We have heard—he is on his way to New Orleans."

The priest gave a wave of his hand that was at once superior and indicated a rather ironical pity.

"He *is* dead," he returned. "He was wounded in an Indian skirmish at Lapeer on the Flint River, and taken prisoner, but left behind to die. An Indian woman nursed him—I had established a mission not far from there. I visited him twice. I administered the last rites of the Church; and he was hardly conscious at the end. He could not have lived an hour. A week afterward the wigwam was burned. It was his funeral pyre."

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Barbe turned to Angelique in desperation. Which story was true? One or the other must be mistaken. A dying man, wounded at that, could not recover in so short a time and leave the place, and with no trace, disappear mysteriously.

Angelique recovered herself first. "Monsieur," she began, with dignity, "we know nothing about you. You may be an impostor in a priest's garb. You must have some one to corroborate your story, to prove that you have a right to act in this matter. Sylvie Perrier has friends who will fight for her to the last."

"Mademoiselle, will not this go a long way in any court?" and he tapped the parchment that he had carefully rolled up again. "Sylvie Perrier and her estates belong to the Convent of St. Eudor. Even the Spanish law would admit that. I warn you it will be a sharp fight and you will be worsted."

Barbe was about to speak, but Angelique made a sign.

"Still we shall not turn her over to you until the courts so decide. And we must have better proof that Hugh de Brienne is dead."

The priest looked at her steadily, but she never blanched, though every nerve was in a quiver.

"As to that, the proof will be forthcoming. I am well known at the mission—I served seven years and only returned a year ago. Because I knew these particulars I was selected for this important matter."

"I think, too, Monsieur Aubreton, the cousin and next in the succession, may have something to say. He is of age."

"He can hardly marry his cousin's widow," returned the priest with a sneer.

"We are all Huguenots, Monsieur; besides, the relationship between them is not so near as cousins. I doubt if

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the Marquise knew what she was signing. I for one did not. It should have been read to us."

The priest shrugged his shoulders and deepened the lines on either side of his mouth by a peculiar compression of the lips.

"May I see this young person?"

"Not to-day, Monsieur," Angelique answered, decisively.

"To-morrow, at ten then. And I will bring not only witnesses for myself, but an alcalde and a notary. Meanwhile—it will not do to try another escape."

"We are among friends now, Sir Priest," the girl said, haughtily. "And we can appeal to the law."

He bowed and turned to the doorway. When he had gone through, the bar gave its dull snap.

"Oh, what are we to do?" cried Barbe.

"There must be some redress for us. Sylvie cannot be snatched away in this fashion. And immured in a convent! Oh, Barbe, let us pray that the word from the American is trustworthy."

"My dear little darling! And her mother said, 'Never, never leave her, Barbe, even when she is a woman grown.' It is the fortune they want. Let them take that. Oh, let us give up everything. And would it not be wise to send the child away to hide her——"

"No, I would not let her out of my sight," returned Angelique. "And it does seem as if Gervaise had some right to protect her. Oh, Barbe, let us not get so desperately frightened. When Gervaise comes he may think of something. And I know M. Lavalette will befriend us."

They watched for Gervaise. Sylvie ran out and in with Hylas beside her. At every stir he pricked up his ears and listened.

"Keep the gates well locked, Jaques," said Barbe. "And come in and listen to what I have to say."

Jaques was surprised at first.

"It is part of the old scheme," he said, presently. "And I suppose it is possible to get the possession of the estates still, or they would not take all this trouble. So much property has been confiscated or destroyed. But I know the Marquise never meant to consign her to such hands. And, you see, the Sieur Hugh receiving their rites, dying in the Church as one may say, makes their case stronger."

"You think, then, he is dead in spite of the word that came from the American?"

"I am afraid," shaking his head slowly.

It was dusk when Gervaise returned, really discouraged with his waiting. Not a sight, not even a line, from the travellers. He had inspected every point of egress. And then to hear this news!

There was but little sleep that night. And all the morning Gervaise kept saying, "They never will dare! You see, there will have to be law-processes and everything. I doubt if they could take her back to France. Only just now matters are so unsettled. The province has been transferred to France beyond a doubt. The *Moniteur* would not discourse so confidently on the subject if it was not true. General Victor is expected every day with his forces. There will be new laws of course."

"And those people are coming. There is an army of them. Oh, what shall we do?" cried Barbe, in affright.

Gervaise looked dazed himself.

"I suppose there is nothing but to let them present their case and listen, and perhaps fight our way out. Yes, there are the priests and two officers, and that M'sieu Peloubet who will argue on the side of the longest purse.

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Yes, Marti, here in the court. Jaques, you are not to be out of hearing."

Père Moras bowed courteously to the ladies. He wished to present his friend, Father Gilbert, who for years had been a most earnest and devoted priest at the North among the Indians. He had been sent from the Convent of St. Eudor on a most delicate mission, but it would also be necessary to invoke the law in his behalf. To-morrow at ten there would be a judicial hearing at court, at which they were to produce the child Sylvie Perrier, widow of the Sieur de Brienne——"

"The Sieur de Brienne is not dead," announced Gervaise, most decisively.

"Ah,—you have proof? You will be called to produce it then. A mere impression will not do in the face of facts."

"Oh, Hylas! Hylas!" cried Sylvie as the dog with a swift bound swept through the court and made a frantic leap over the wall, a thing he had never attempted before. She stood still, abashed at the company on which she had unwittingly intruded. "Oh, Gervaise, will you see?—some one whistled——" she cried.

There was a sound at the gate. Gervaise threw it wide open, and with French fervor flung his arms about Roger Norton's neck.

"Oh," in a full, choking voice. "If you had brought me all the gold of Peru you could not be more welcome."

"I have not brought the gold, but the cousin as I promised. Oh, Hylas, down, down, sir! you will smother me in your joy! We should have reached here last evening but for a series of mishaps. Hylas, go and get your pretty young mistress."

Then Gervaise Aubreton turned to his cousin.

"Pardon me," he began, a little awkwardly.

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"It is Gervaise. Thank Heaven that I have found you all alive—all but my mother. You are no longer a boy——"

"Come in here and prove yourself alive. No, stay a moment. Hugh, when you wished to marry Sylvie Perrier——"

"I—wished to marry—ah, I remember it was a plan of my mother's. She once wrote about it, and I said I would have no objection a few years hence. I was too full of adventure just then—and Sylvie must have been a mere child. Why——"

Gervaise was simply staring. "Then you did not know about it? Why, it is a worse tangle than ever. Hugh, just before the Marquise died—she insisted upon a ceremony. I stood in your place. I can't stop to explain all, but in some queer way, Sylvie and her possessions, which it seems are considerable, have gone into the hands of the Convent of St. Eudor. You were supposed to have died at a place in Michigan——"

"But I am not dead," he interrupted, "though I came near it, I admit. I do not understand—this marriage."

Norton was half listening and trying to defend himself from the caresses of the overjoyed Hylas.

"Then come in and prove this Père Gilbert mistaken. The rest can wait."

He seized him by the arm and pushed rather than led him to the court. "Messieurs," in a tone of triumph, "allow me to present to you the Sieur de Brienne."

All eyes were turned to him. Barbe and Angelique sat together on a bench, Sylvie, half frightened, stood just as she had on her first entrance, not having the courage to follow Hylas, as she longed to do.

Père Gilbert arose and came nearer, studied him with severe scrutiny.

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"Ah, Père Gilbert, I am here in the flesh! Perhaps your blessing had a beneficial effect, I know your care did. And that good Wenonah, no thanks could ever repay her."

"But—and the wigwam was burnt. The shrubs all about——"

"Yes. Some of our party traced me and conveyed me back to camp with my good nurse. And there I recovered of my illness and wounds. I sent to France and received word of my mother's death; the rest of the family seemed to have disappeared. I could get no trace of them until a short time ago I met a most excellent friend, who knew where they had found refuge. So in his company I came hither."

Then Hugh de Brienne glanced about. Was this beautiful woman the little girl he had left at home? As for Madame Champe and her charge, he hardly knew them at all. And this lovely child——"

Sylvie ran, startled, to Barbe and hid her golden head on the ample shoulder.

"Word had come to France of your death," began Père Gilbert, stiffly. I was sent to undertake some business. Is it true, Monsieur de Brienne, that you by your own wish and desire espoused Sylvie Perrier?"

De Brienne's half-uttered denial was met by an imploring look from Gervaise.

"That is true, gentlemen, strange as it may seem to you," and he was bewildered by his own confession. "Sylvie Perrier is my wife."

"Then, Messieurs," and the notary rose, vexed at having the matter that had promised some rich fees end this way—"then there is nothing further left for us to do. We cannot administer on a man's estate when the man comes back to life to take charge of it himself."

SORROW'S CROWN OF SORROW.

"And this deed of gift or guardianship, or whatever you may call it, with its signatures of the marriage will be returned to us," said Aubreton, in a decisive manner.

"Claim it—to save Sylvie," whispered Gervaise, as Père Gilbert looked uncertain.

"I demand the marriage contract, if that is what you call it, and any other evidence you may have," Hugh de Brienne exclaimed, authoritatively. "I shall proceed to France to settle up any matters pertaining to the De Chatilly estate as well as my own."

The resolute face did not look as if it would stand much trifling. When it came to that Père Gilbert was not sure that the parchment would be of the slightest account to any one else. Almost without personal volition he handed it to De Brienne, and then he was angry with himself.

The party rose to withdraw. "If there is any need of a hearing at the Court House, we will be there promptly," exclaimed Gervaise, with a touch of triumph perceptible in his tone.

"We will notify you if there is," returned the notary, stiffly. Then they bowed, wondering a little as they went. Père Gilbert could hardly believe his own eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SORROW'S CROWN OF SORROW.

THERE was a curious silence for some moments. Hugh de Brienne felt as if he had been suddenly projected into a new world of which he knew very little. He had been so glad to hear of these relatives, for he had

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often thought about them. Gervaise and Angelique had been most in his mind. But the stirring life he had led, the adventures he had met with, the broad development that had been his, the new, fascinating spirit that pervaded everything, the strength and grandeur had almost crowded out the past. For that was what the New World seemed to him.

Norton had wandered down the oleander walk, where Hylas might indulge in his overjoy without disturbing any one. Delicacy as well, for there were some family mysteries, that was evident.

Hugh unrolled the parchment and began to read. A frown settled across his brow. What sort of madness must have seized upon his mother!

"Gervaise!" There was a sharpness in his tone that struck even himself. "I cannot understand," he said. "Was it persecution that sent you here? I supposed it was the frightful disorder of the times. And how could this be allowed?"

"The Marquise insisted. She was very ill, you know. And we were all young then——"

"Yes," said Barbe. "But she thought she was following out your wishes and providing for the safety and future welfare of the child. I do not think she ever read all that contract. It was done so hurriedly. And that very night we fled. My husband had heard some whispers that she, that my darling would be taken from us, from me."

"This is Sylvie Perrier! Why she is only a child now!" He advanced a step nearer. "And then Angelique was only a little girl."

It was coming to him by degrees. There was all the fortune. That had tempted his mother. But then in France marriages were generally arranged by the parents.

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"And you took my place, Gervaise? You answered for me. Oh, you could not quite understand what you were doing. Yet it saved her, or you all saved her from falling into the wrong hands. But to have a husband thrust upon one in childhood——"

"Let us get to the bottom of the matter. I did your mother's bidding," said Gervaise. "We have never been able, or thought it wise, to explain to Sylvie, but now——" He turned scarlet. It was hard to establish his own freedom.

Sylvie raised her head and was looking at both intently. Some strange awakening stirred within her. Then she crossed to Gervaise, put her hand in his.

"I shall soon be twelve," she began, with dignity. "And then Barbe said——"

"Listen, dear." His voice softened to tenderness. He possessed the true *savoir faire* of his nation. "The Marquise had loved your mother dearly. She loved you, a little child. There were troublous times for little girls who were heiresses. So she thought Hugh could care for you and yours better than any one else, only you must be his wife. Perhaps she knew more than any one else, more than she confessed. We were so young and inexperienced. Otherwise you would have been bundled into the convent, perhaps Barbe sent away from you. And so I stood in Hugh's stead and married you for him——"

Hugh de Brienne looked at his young cousin with a kind of softening gratitude. He had told the story from the most attractive side. Even if the Marquise had cared for the estates, many a French mother before her had made a good marriage for her son. And Sylvie might have been a prey to more than one party, he saw. His eyes had appreciation in them, approval.

Sylvie dropped Gervaise's hand. She stood a little

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apart, her very tallest, but she was not large of her age. Her blue eyes hardened to steely gleams, her rosebud mouth took on severe lines like a woman in indignation. Her slim figure seemed to swell and throb.

"And you did not love me!" she cried in piercing pathos. "You did not want me for your little wife! You will marry Hortense, or perhaps Zenobie—Zenobie who laughs at Telano and torments me whenever I see her. You married me to this—this ugly old man!" she could not think of anything worse to say, for his faults and virtues were alike unknown to her. And truly Hugh de Brienne did not look young for his years, which were nearing thirty. Hardships and fighting Indians had told upon him. "And now," she continued, "I shall never love you any more. I shall hate you both. I——"

Suddenly she flew to Barbe and sank in her arms, weeping hysterically.

"It is very hard," confessed Gervaise, whose lips were all of a quiver, "but, you see, the truth had to be told, and there is no better time than now. But we have hardly given you a word of welcome, cousin Hugh. And sometime Sylvie will realize what you have snatched her from. Oh, we are so thankful to have you alive! But where is M'sieu Norton? We owe him a debt. I traced you about Detroit and then lost sight of you——"

"I was carried down into Ohio by some friends. I had a hard time getting really well. Afterward I met Boone, and John Sevier, and others—there were so many plans on foot."

He looked sharply at Gervaise, who nodded.

Hugh drew a long breath. "It is a wonderful country," he exclaimed. "It would be grand if it were all united from ocean to ocean, a dream larger than that of this Corsican who shapes the destinies of France. For

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where a place is divided up in petty governments there will always be friction and disputes. Let me see that marriage contract again."

Gervaise handed it to him from the rustic stand where it had been laid.

He perused it attentively. "I do not believe my mother was aware of its contents. The De Chatillys have been Huguenots from early times. There were Catholics at Saint Morne, I think. Well—we must do what is best for the child. Little Sylvie——" and Hugh approached her.

She flung out her hand forbiddingly. "I hate you!" she cried, in an angry tempest. "I will not speak to you, nor to Gervaise," and then, sobbing, she fled down in the garden, almost running into Roger Norton's arms. Hylas sat close to his master. Telano was gravely performing.

"My little Sylvie, what is the matter?"

"Oh, I have no one," in a piteous tone. "Why did you bring that dark ugly man here to make trouble? Gervaise does not care for me any more, though I think he hasn't really cared since he came from the North. And Hylas! he will go away with you. I see in his eyes that he loves your little finger more than my whole body! I've been so good to him, too. Oh, Telano, there is no one but you——"

She hugged the crane with such passionate eagerness that he made a protest. Hylas came to her with questioning eyes.

"Go away!" She stamped her pretty foot. "Go to your master. I shall not love you any more! I shall not love anybody! There is no one in the whole wide world that I shall care for any more. Perhaps they *will* put me in a convent, and I shall not care. I am so sad, so forlorn, so deserted!"

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It was pathetic to see her unreasoning grief. Norton was not a little puzzled to know what had brought all this about. Jaques was coming down the path. Barbe had sent him to find Sylvie, though she refused his proffers of comfort as obstinately and despairingly as the others'. Norton rose and sauntered to the house.

Meanwhile the relatives had been making acquaintance anew with a little help from the past. Angelique admitted to herself almost at once that this Sieur Hugh was not at all the knight of her old remembrance in the woods of Brienne. He was still, in her mind, a graceful, enthusiastic young fellow, quoting verses and bits of wit, a court accomplishment in those days, his fine dark eyes full of sentiment, his voice with an enchanting cadence, his whole air and manner captivating.

The eyes were dark but almost severe. They had been looking at but few pleasures since that time, and much hard, cruel reality. He was very thin and his drooping nose seemed out of proportion, while his complexion had been turned almost olive by sun and wind. And when one's ideal is suddenly wrenched out to be replaced by such a different reality, the old life is laid by like a story that is told and done with.

"The poor little girl," he said, with a tenderness in his tone Angelique had not looked for. "Of course the establishment of such a marriage is not to be considered for a moment. I must do my best to free her. It may be wisdom to go to France and see what I can do for her and perhaps for myself, but I am charmed with this New World and the large liberty in it, the kind of men it makes, the kind of women, too," and there came a flush to his pale cheek.

"Ah, he has seen some woman he admires," thought Angelique. And then through the fringy laburnums

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she caught sight of the tall, fair fellow, with the sun making an aureola of his bronze-brown hair, the ruddy color of his cheeks, the lithe, sinewy figure as he played with the eager dog.

Hugh asked about lodging-houses in the vicinity.

"Oh, there are none nearby. But now that you are here, Hugh, you must take the head of the family. And the house fortunately is large enough for us all."

"You are most cordial," he returned, politely.

"Yes, *mon cousin*," added Angelique. "We have counted so much on your coming, feared so much, too."

"If I could have known you were here! I had many an anxious night after the news of my mother's death; one keeps busy through the day and is not so easily disturbed. Then came all those horrible excesses, and whether you were all dead or alive I had no means of finding out. I only heard you had fled."

"Monsieur Norton, come and join us," cried Gervaise, with delightful heartiness. "We have all the relationships straight. We have the head of the family. But do you suppose I shall be as attractive to the demoiselles when I no longer have a title in prospect?"

He laughed merrily. He was light of heart, relieved of the perplexing burden that had been his so long. Poor little Sylvie. She was nothing but a child.

Viny found her by the little lake crying as if all the sluice-gates of her heart had broken up and were like to sweep her away. The tender black hands of the maiden gathered her in her arms and carried her upstairs, showering endearing epithets upon her, kissing brow and cheek with fond young lips.

"I am sick," she cried wearily. "Take off my frock and put me in bed, Viny. No one cares about me. They are all full of that black-browed cousin, and I hate him!"

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"He will go away again, Mam'selle," in her soothing, languorous tone. "But—they have wanted him so long."

"Let them have him. Oh, Viny, I am very, very sorrowful. Viny, do you think Zenobie—well, attractive?"

"She is bright, piquant, and her laugh is—oh, charming! She will have plenty of lovers."

"I hope she will," with a touch of vengefulness hardly in keeping with the wish. Ah, if Zenobie could flaunt her betrothed in the very face and eyes of Gervaise. He liked Claire and was fond of dancing with her, yet Claire did not want him for a husband. But what Sylvie most desired now was that Gervaise should suffer some sharp rending pang of disappointment.

"Viny! Viny!" called the peremptory tone of the elder servant. "Come at once."

"You cannot!" declared Sylvie. "You must remain here. Why, I should die alone!"

Angelique came up. "Let me stay with you," she said, in a beseeching tone. "And there is so much to tell you——"

"I will not have you! Go to the cousin you are so glad to see. I want only Viny——"

"But Viny is needed——"

"I do not care! Do you want me to die here all alone?" Sylvie raised herself and brought her small dimpled fist down on the pillow with a good deal of force for a dying child. "Go away, all of you! I will have no one but Viny."

"We have all spoiled her," said Angelique, excusingly. "She is a wilful little thing at best, and just now—but there seemed no better way then."

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She paused blushing and confused. Gervaise colored as well, and had a sharp pang in his heart as to what would be an honorable thing when Sylvie Perrier was set free from this unfortunate marriage-bond.

After the meal they all withdrew to the garden. The crane stood melancholy enough and would not listen to Angelique's charming.

"It is a beautiful spot!" remarked Hugh. "And now I think it strange that I never came here, the only real French city. But I have never been in love with the Spaniard. Poor Louisiana has been bandied about as if she was of little worth. And she has the key to the western country."

"Spanish to French, then to Crozat, then to the Compagnie de l'Occident, then from Louis XV. to Spain in that shameful treaty, and now back again——"

Norton and De Brienne exchanged meaning glances. There was another change impending.

"The French forces have not come in yet?"

"There will be no French forces, Monsieur."

Gervaise looked rather amazed.

"But, Monsieur, we are to belong to France once more. Ah, I doubt if you can understand the temper of the people here. And if you think this beautiful, what will you say to the Lake, to Bayou Têche? And Marigny and Pointe Coupée—we must go up there, Gervaise. Now that we have found you, *mon cousin*, we shall inspire you with enthusiasm. Such wilds and woods, such streams and bayous, such bloom everywhere!" exclaimed Angelique.

He smiled and nodded. She felt curiously free with him as one might with an uncle. He was the head of the family and he would add dignity to it. She was glad he

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and the young American were friends. And she knew by some intuition, that might have been born of experience, that she would never care for a lover like Hugh de Brienne.

That evening when the American was gone and the briery little girl lay fast asleep in her white bed, refusing all good-night kisses and all attention but Viny's, and Angelique sat by her window too full of thought to sleep, wondering about the stars in the moonless heaven and if there were strange lives and strange stories of men and women loving and being loved. For it is a curious relief to put this delicious happening a long way off. In the early days of love one likes to believe its mysterious sweetness is in the far future, while feeling the golden atmosphere all about.

Hugh de Brienne, Gervaise and Madame Champe were unravelling the family history.

"I shall go to France as soon as possible," he declared. "If there is any of the old estate left I shall be thankful; but I am not afraid of making my way in this New World. I like its breadth and energy, its boundless aspirations, its marvellous opportunities. I shall get what there is of Sylvie's fortune, and have this wretched travesty of a marriage annulled. The child has a right to her own sweet life. Even if she cared for me I should be a decade too old. Afterward I shall settle myself somewhere and become a citizen of this proud Republic, that is making such rapid strides."

Barbe looked pleased and admiration shone in her eyes. He was not going to make the little one's fortune an object for himself.

"Gervaise, if you——" then he flushed even under the swarthy skin of his cheeks.

Gervaise caught his meaning. "Oh, no, no!" he cried

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eagerly. "I have always thought of her, you see, as belonging to you, but we had to let her believe *that* story," flushing up to the edge of his forehead. "She has been a pet and plaything, spoiled, as Barbe says; but there are years enough to recover, she is still so young."

"Poor little thing," De Brienne said, with a curious tenderness. Had she cared for Gervaise?

Sylvie ordered her breakfast sent up to her the next morning. The sun was so full of dancing lights, the birds were so joyous, the air delicious, and now she did not feel at all like dying. Telano was calling her from below, the great green parrot climbed the balcony-railing and cried out in his best Spanish, "Hillo! Hillo! Not up yet?"

"Yes, I'm *up* surely. Viny, will you see if those men are gone——" in her most disdainful tone.

"Yes, Mam'selle. The American M'sieu came for them."

Sylvie was unreasonably vexed. She wanted them there so she could disdain them.

"Then I may venture down. Viny, I am desperately angry with Gervaise. I couldn't even look at him."

"Yes, come down. Telano will be so glad."

"Where is Hylas?"

"His master took him home with him last night."

"And the deceitful thing has made such pretensions of loving me! I *do* really think he belonged to me. Did he have on his collar?"

"Oh, yes, Mam'selle."

"Well, I do not care."

She did care very much, for if she had not she would not have referred to it at all.

Angelique had looked in, but Sylvie had resolutely turned her face to the wall. And just then Monsieur Norton had come.

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The breakfast was delicious. "Why, I didn't have any supper last night," she said, rather gayly.

Barbe was sitting in the court as she went down. "Oh, my little darling," she said, in a delighted tone.

Sylvie ran to her arms. "Oh, Barbe," she murmured, half smothered in Barbe's neck, "is it true that Gervaise married me for that dreadful man?"

"My dear, not that altogether. We thought that under the circumstances it would be better. It had something to do with your fortune. Being head of the house he could keep it for you. Of course some one had to stand in his place. But you are not to be his wife, either. He is going to Paris in a few weeks and will have it annulled. Then you will be quite free. You must not blame Gervaise. He was young, under age, and had to do as the Marquise bade him."

Ah, that was the sting of it! To do as he was bidden, not because it made her happy. She gave a long sigh. There was a subtle sense of mortification, too.

"I do not think you are able to understand it all yet. As you grow older——"

"Oh, yes, I understand that—that no one wants me," and the sweet face was piteous in its forlornness.

"Oh, my dear, you are all wrong. The *Sieur de Brienne* will be your guardian, just like a father. He counts on making you very happy. It will be like *M'sieu Lavalette* and his children."

"I thought he was going to Paris." She made an obstinate little *moue*.

"But he is coming back. And then we shall have a house of our own."

"I like this place. Perhaps he will want to live somewhere else."

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"Then he may let us remain here."

Telano was loudly demanding his mistress. She skipped lightly down the path.

"It is a hard thing to happen to a child," Barbe ruminated. But the *Sieur* is certainly very honorable and noble. Not every man would do so."

Jaques was trimming up the shrubbery. Everything grew to a wilderness in a week's time, he thought.

"*Bon soir* to your ladyship. Come and get some roses to your cheeks. You look a little pale this morning. And the news? Perhaps you have not heard that. Madame Fleurien has a little daughter. And the *gra'mère* is very poorly. Father Antoine was there nearly all night. One comes and another goes."

"It is not so hard to die when you are very old, is it, Jaques?"

It would seem very hard for her to die this morning.

"Well, I don't know, Mam'selle. I'm not very old," and Jaques's face settled into humorous gleams.

She ran around gayly. But she missed Hylas. Telano seemed asking where he was. Oh, it was hard to be forgotten all in a moment.

Angelique was sitting in a little arbor sewing leisurely, that is, taking a few stitches and then looking down on her English book.

"Come and let us read together," she said. "The others have gone for a whole long day to see the town and the lakes, and we shall have to amuse ourselves. Claire has a little girl—we must make her something pretty."

Sylvie tried hard to preserve her anger, but Angelique's tone was so persuasive. And then—was she really vexed with Angel? The smile was as sweet as the roses

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blowing about. The child came and kissed her. "Oh, you are reading verses. Read aloud."

"Suppose you read. They are very simple with no long words in them."

"Why, I have never seen this book before!"

"No," returned Angelique softly, but why she should blush about it puzzled Sylvie.

It was a little volume of English verse that Norton had brought from the East. "You may like it as a reading exercise," he said, in an ordinary fashion that took off the air of a gift.

"Oh, dear, I make so many blunders!" Sylvie laughed merrily at herself.

But they both agreed the poems were very sweet and charming.

"Angel——" after a pause—"did you like that—that new Monsieur?"

"Cousin Hugh?" with a cordial smile.

Sylvie nodded.

"I liked him better at breakfast. And he looks quite like the Marquise. He is very thin. Some flesh would improve him."

"He is very ugly."

"He is not very handsome," assented Angel, with a smile, for she was thinking of the contrast between him and the American.

"I shall never like him," confidently.

"Sylvie, do not be such an unreasonable little child. But you do not need to like him."

Sylvie glanced out of upbraiding eyes.

"We must let all those old things go, dear. The Marquise thought she was acting for the best, and perhaps she did. I knew him when I was a little girl like you, and Gervaise was very fond of him."

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"Why didn't he marry you."

Angelique drew in her breath to keep the scarlet out of her face. She would have been glad enough then; now she asked ten times that happiness.

"And had you and your fortune hidden away in a convent. You might have been made a nun whether you liked it or not."

A shudder ran over Sylvie. This had been done to save her, she understood that.

"But it was wicked in Gervaise to—to make believe. And always to let me think——"

"He has been trying very hard not to make believe. He loves you just as he always did."

They went to feed the swans and gather some fruit. There were a few late oranges that were full of ripening flavor. There were others just coming into blooming, fruit-setting, they seemed to keep at it most of the year round.

What a long, long day it was! In the evening a soft shower came pattering down on the leaves with a musical sound. Sylvie lay in her little bed listening to it, for she was not sleepy, and wondering about her life. She still felt very sore that Gervaise had not—well, had not loved her. Girls did not love first. And yet she had loved fondly, strongly, jealously, and she thought she had a right, when really she had no right at all. It was very hard to be deceived.

She was up quite early the next morning and went down to feed the swans and the herons. Monsieur de Brienne stood just beyond the great fig-tree culling some of its fruit. Sylvie stopped short.

"Little Sylvie," said the voice that had a kind of commanding accent in it, "come here and speak to me. I am

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your third-cousin, I think your mother was my second-cousin."

"Oh, did you know my mother——"

"We were almost of an age. I used to be at Chatilly Court when I was a boy. Yes, I was very fond of your mother."

"And my papa?"

"I never saw much of him. After they were married he went to Italy and she rejoined him. A soldier's wife she was. But your good Barbe can tell you much more. She was with her all the time. And when she came to Brienne I had just started for America."

She was crumbling bread to the swans. Yes, Barbe had promised to tell her all this some day when she was older, so why should she ask anything of him?

"Sylvie," he said presently, wondering at her sudden loss of interest and her silence. "I want you to trust me. I mean to be your best friend. And you must not hate me for what I really had no hand in. Now that I have studied it all over it can easily be undone. And you must consider yourself quite free until the law makes you so."

Sylvie hung her head. She was in no hurry to be won over. And looking at him from under her long lashes she felt a little afraid of his stern face. The men she had come to know best were so affable and smiling; Henri and Gervaise were so merry.

"Yes—I want to be your friend—I want you to trust me," he repeated.

She had been trusting everybody and the trust had been pettishly. "I do not care for anything."

"I shall try to get back your fortune——"

"I do not care for any fortune," she made answer pettishly "I do not care for anything."

"Oh, you will in two or three years."

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She straightened her figure; she compressed her lips that were like the opening leaf of a rosebud. "I have fed all my crumbs," and she turned to go in.

"What a perverse little thing," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW INHERITANCE.

SOON after breakfast word was sent down that *gra'mère* had died in the night.

"I must go up," Gervaise said at once. "Cousin Hugh, come for the walk."

"With pleasure," was the answer.

"And they will spend an hour with Zenobie," thought the jealous little girl.

After their call of condolence, and they saw no one but Madame Lavalette, they took another long ramble. Gervaise had made no proffer of reconciliation. He had said good-morning to her and she had not replied, except with an indifferent nod of the head.

How lovely it was that glowing autumn morning, the blazing splendor of the sun tempered by the shades in the luxuriant foliage.

"It is a magnificent country!" cried Hugh, roused to enthusiasm. "Oh, I do not wonder that even the first settlers were struck with its richness. And I can see how they could fancy there was gold in the yellow sands. But it is not gold alone that makes a prosperous country. The northeast looks barren to this, but the art

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and industry of man coin it into profit. They have no dreams of gold-mines in their rugged soil."

"It was largely a Spanish dream," returned Gervaise, smiling. "The Frenchman thinks more of his home. You must see what the Acadians have done."

"I saw what they had left," with a little grimness. "Theirs was a cruel removal. I went first to Canada, you know. After my next journey I think I shall be content to settle down."

"You will not remain in France?"

"Oh, no. I am curiously interested in seeing this country work out the large problems it has undertaken. I have not much faith in the Consulate."

"You think there will be another revolution?" Gervaise questioned in surprise.

"No. The mailed hand is too strong. The ambition is too soaring to rest here. Napoleon will never make a Washington. As for my own estate, I expect little of that. But I shall try to get something for Sylvie. Gervaise——"

He looked steadily at the young fellow. He liked him very much. All the fondness for the bright boyish comrade of years ago had returned. If he could marry Sylvie when the unfortunate complication had been brought to naught!

"I understand you, Hugh," and he flushed scarlet. "But—there is some one else, and she is such a child. With a fortune she will have no lack of lovers. It would really be unfair to take advantage of this youthful penchant."

"Perhaps so. I wish you all success." Yet Hugh sighed for little Sylvie's sake. And it would be agreeable to have the branches of the family thus united.

"You do not care to go to France with me?"

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"I ought not leave them alone. How do we know but another attempt may be made to obtain possession of Sylvie?"

"True. Well, perhaps it is fortunate that I have a husband's authority. Did you ever see a person more nonplussed than Father Gilbert? He was a good man, a devoted missionary. The Indian woman, Wenonah, was a devout Catholic. I think she saved me from the enemy, as well as brought me back to life. And she thought me dying when the priest came in. I do not remember anything of the ceremony, but it comforted her immeasurably. And with this contract or assignment, they certainly would have had a right to the child and her property. So you need not regret that you stood in my place. It will all come right for her."

But the child-woman was not to be so easily placated. She could be politely indifferent to De Brienne, for she stood a little in awe of him, but she had dozens of sharp-pointed arrows for Gervaise; indeed, she bristled all over with them.

There was the funeral at the Lavalettes', a very imposing affair that would have rejoiced the little old lady who had rounded out her century and who unknowingly had ended with the foreign domination of the province to which she had come a hesitating stranger, and led a long and happy life.

For events were marching on rapidly. While the French were watching with bated breath for the promised restoration to their own land, which was after all more a matter of sentiment than any forerunner of prosperity, instead of General Victor came a vessel from Bordeaux with the official announcement that the whole province had been ceded to the United States for a money consideration. Again they had been sold by a French ruler.

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The last of November the whole town was astir. The Place d'Armes glittered with troops and resounded with salvos of artillery. The inefficient old man, Don John Manuel de Salcedo, perhaps no unfit representative, in his infirm old age, of the once powerful kingdom that had terrorized the world and was now fast losing its grasp on its colonies, met the French Laussat and delivered to him the keys of New Orleans. The Marquis of Casa Calvo declared the people absolved from all allegiance to Spain.

And now from the flagstaff slowly descended the colors of Spain, that had flaunted defiance and rule for thirty-five years, that had claimed jurisdiction over the mighty Mississippi, hampered commerce, endeavored to shut out the new, rising nation on its westward march of civilization. The French flag went up. There was some ignorant rejoicing, many cheers for the beloved tricolor, much shaking of heads and muttering under one's breath what it was not advisable to say aloud.

Twenty days later the ceremony was repeated. The young Virginian, Governor Claiborne, appointed by President Jefferson, and his aide, General Wilkinson, received from Laussat in the name of Bonaparte, ruler of France, the keys of the port, the authority of the whole magnificent territory, and the town of New Orleans was American. Down slowly came the tricolor, but up went another, the Stars and Stripes.

There was little rejoicing. There were those who recalled the advent of O'Reilly, when the flag had been lowered, and the strong hand of Spanish law brought death and banishment for many. But now they made no appeal to France. The humiliation of a price—eighty million francs—the being cast off a second time made

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their shame, as they thought, complete. They were in the hands of new masters, why should they rejoice?

And they were not in love with their new masters, the restless, pushing Americans. There were militia companies parading the streets, there were American appointees in offices, there were new courts, new ways, and the barbarous English tongue was heard everywhere. Creole indigation, overflowed, but did not run to riot except in unimportant instances, in a cabaret quarrel and fight, or at a French ball.

But old New Orleans was slowly to fade away. Even now the picturesque quaint foreign town was overflowing its boundaries. Streets stretched out and were building up, even if they were unpaved and poorly lighted. Stores increased, warehouses multiplied, and the town was fast becoming what its destiny had been from the first, a commercial seaport. So many restrictions were removed that trade took leaps and bounds. There was a splendid future to the town.

Yet the Creoles stood a little apart. To be sure, they accepted office, they loaned money when they had it. The old Jesuit plantations, where the first sugar-cane had been tried and failed, had been confiscated years before and were now laid out in streets. The Faubourg St. Mary seemed to build up by the hour. Even the old Carondelet Canal, half choked with débris, was busy enough. Lake Maurepas, lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain were dotted with trading-craft, docks, and wharves. And farther down all was activity.

In the town itself the little cabins with their ill-lighted stores were replaced by brick buildings or those of substantial frame or plaster. And though the old native residents felt that they were being pushed to the wall, they saw presently that there was room and business,

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that they were lifted up to commercial respect, and some even then dreamed of a great future, but no one's imaginings could have surpassed the reality. For Louisiana had been transplanted for the last time. There were Spaniards who insisted Spain's rule had been judicious and that her eclipse as a great power was only temporary; that when she arose in her might she would receive her colonies back with open arms; there were French who looked for a quarrel with America and a recession, but neither came. Old things had passed away. A new New Orleans was rising on the foundation of the old.

All this had caused no little excitement at the old house on the St. John Road. The Lavalettes had been full of enthusiasm at first, and then filled with such bitter disappointment that Zenobie did not conceal her indignation from her young admirer. The De Longprés were more prudent; perhaps the head of the house saw clearly where his best interest lay. The western trade was coming down the river from the great country, the rivers and lakes above. The agricultural resources would be enormous.

"We may not adore our new masters," said Monsieur de Longpré to Hugh de Bienne, "but what will you? We did not adore the old. These give us more privileges. They are broader. It brings business."

Monsieur de Bienne had already fallen into a certain friendliness with the merchant. And though he eyed the American with a faint distrust, the two were such friends that he understood a coldness to him would be resented.

They as well as some others knew of the grand scheme that had received its death-blow from various sources before it had perfected any real organization.

"It is the best thing that could have happened," said

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Norton. "One can see such a division would have led to endless bickerings. England is ready to spring upon us again, and France captious and overbearing. Some day we shall be united for another grand fight, and then we shall learn the advantages of union. Florida must be ours."

Norton was offered a position under the new government; and though he did not admire Wilkinson, indeed, knew too much about his intrigues, he felt he might be able to serve his country in more ways than translating between French and English and attending to correspondence.

They had all gone down in the town to see the Spanish flag lowered. It was a happy day for Mère Milhet as well as many another. Old scores were repaid. The new French ruler could dictate terms to Spain, ah, that was glorious! And though the Lavalettes were in mourning and went into no society, they must be witnesses of this grand event. There was Aunt Melanie, and Hortense, quite closely guarded now, as she was a young lady.

Sylvie had been a very unhappy little girl. After a few days Gervaise began to act quite as if nothing had happened between them. He would much rather have put his arm about her and strolled up and down the old garden as they used; she was not only cold and resentful, but her very air suggested that she would not listen with any degree of reason. And he was enjoying his new-found freedom so much. He had felt curiously irked since his return until the word had come about his cousin. And now he was light-hearted enough, and gay with Angel.

Monsieur de Brienne was very gentle and fatherly. He admired Telano, he haunted the little lake, he talked garden and fruit to Jaques, government and the future

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of the country with Gervaise, and dropped into confidences with Angelique. She tried very hard to resist his kindness, but he seemed not to remark that.

The Marquis de Brienne did not lack for social recognition if he was not handsome and vivacious. And now down on the plaza Sylvie felt really proud to be in his charge. To be sure, Gervaise went at once to the side of Madame Lavalette and Zenobie, who was extremely decorous and nodded gravely to her friends. Hortense, on the contrary, was all brightness and animation, and full of enthusiasm.

Gervaise made many errands up to the plantation for the next fortnight. Sometimes Hugh accompanied him, and while he would talk to Madame Mère, the young people down at the end of the gallery found many things to say to each other.

But when the French flag came down, Zenobie's indignation knew no bounds.

"Why, the matter was settled before that," said Gervaise. "It was because you people did not want to believe it. The bargaining had been going on a long time. At first the United States would not pay what Bonaparte asked."

"And the Americans are such petty bargain-makers!" cried the scornful girl. "To buy up a country whether the people will or no! To beat down, to give the lowest price—why, it is like a slave-dealer!"

"And they give the whole province such liberty as they never had before. They can elect their own officers, they can trade where they will. They are a self-governing territory except in a few matters, and some day may be a splendid State."

"Self-governing!" The tone was both bitter and incredulous. "Then they send a governor, an American,

they are forming military companies, they are putting their men in the offices as fast as possible——”

“As if the French wouldn’t have turned out the Spaniards fast enough if they had the power. And your governor would have come from France.”

“We should have given him a welcome, Monsieur. He would have been of our own people. We are French.”

Politics and religion make bitter quarrels. And these young people, the girl knowing nothing about the circumstances of the last two years that had brought about this culmination, the young fellow, whose soul had been broadened by travel and contact with his kind, plunged into an unequal warfare.

“Good-evening, Monsieur,” said Zenobie, loftily, and swept across the gallery.

Gervaise was angry. There were no more idle mornings or pleasant evenings at the Lavalettes’.

The mornings indeed were soon devoted to more substantial matters. M. de Longpré had found a very pleasant and suitable position for the young friend of his son, a fine young fellow, he thought.

And since even the best of girls gossip a little, Hortense was not slow in retailing this to Sylvie, and the little girl took a malicious sort of pleasure in it. She hoped Gervaise loved Zenobie extravagantly, for the more he loved, the more deeply he would suffer. And now he would know!

There were two other circumstances occupying her a good deal. One was the departure of Cousin Hugh. She had grown quite used to him, and somehow, she thought him improved in looks. He was not so thin, that made a difference. His nose was less prominent, and when he smiled—it was a grave sort of smile, but

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had a certain sweetness in it that one could recall so easily—it softened all his face. His eyes were dark and resolute, she had called them fierce at first, but occasionally there came a shade of tenderness in them that almost won her against herself.

The other was a very curious interest in Monsieur Norton, who might be considered a regular evening visitor. Hylas was very glad to come as well. Sylvie always upbraided him for not loving her best, and then they had a royal romp up and down the old garden. Sometimes Angel and M'sieu walked about, for it was still very pleasant; sometimes he read verses to her, or made her read to him. Sylvie liked him very much. He often brought her bonbons—they had them even then, and little girls were fond of them.

One evening Cousin Hugh took Angel down the oleander walk. Sylvie came skipping along.

"I have something quite confidential to say to Angel," and he made a little gesture of dismissal. "Then I have something for your ear alone that Angel must not hear."

"But if it is alike——"

"Ah, but it isn't alike," he interrupted, smiling at Sylvie.

She returned to the court reluctantly. "Telano," she said, sadly, "I wish I had a great secret to tell you. I used to have secrets," and she sighed.

Hugh fell into step with Angelique. How soft and sweet the air was all about them!

"I think if I can get money enough out of the wreck of anything, I shall buy this old place when I come back," he said. "I like it so very much. I like New Orleans, and it has a great future before it. And I feel that I, too, am pervaded with what Gervaise calls patriotism."

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Angel laughed softly. "We shall be French-Americans," she said.

"You do not want to go back to the mother country?"

"Oh, no, no," earnestly.

"I am glad to hear you say so. While I am gone I want to leave Sylvie in your care. She really ought to have some regular education. It is what the province lacks. If some one could be found—I like many things in the Eastern system. But I must say, Angel, I think you unusually intelligent."

"Oh, thank you," she gave a soft little laugh.

"This was not my secret, however. Angel, as head of the family I have been asked to sanction a young man's visits and addresses, and consent to a betrothal. I like him very much. But it is for you decide, my dear cousin. He will ask his own question. He is not rich, though he may be in a few years. I like the fashion of two people making an election. My dear Angel, I hope you will be very happy."

He bent over a little and kissed her on the forehead, but he felt the fluttering warmth on his lips.

"If I had a brother I should like him to resemble Roger Norton," he said.

"Thank you for so high a compliment," she returned.

"You have been a brave girl all the way through," he exclaimed. "You deserve a brave husband. And if you did not mind waiting—I hope to be back in a year at the longest——" he also hoped then to be able to give her a dowry, although he knew this would be no object to Norton. How proud Americans were!

"Oh, yes," she answered. "And I will do my best for Sylvie."

"I really hate to leave you all," and he sighed.

So the arrangements were made for his journey.

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They had heard nothing further of Père Gilbert. He had questioned Father Antoine of the cathedral, and the Father at the convent; but Père Gilbert, so far as they knew, had left New Orleans at once after his fruitless mission.

"My journey to Paris is to claim my wife's estates," he said, in a decisive tone, to Père Moras. "She is my ward as well as wife, but too young to take her position as such. Of course if I had been dead the matter would have been settled otherwise."

"The priest bowed, then said thoughtfully, "But it seems an irregular sort of marriage, to say the least."

"Still the priest of St. Eudor solemnized it. At the proper time there will be another ceremony."

Then they bowed again to each other, and Hugh went his way.

"I doubt if any other Church keeps secrets as well," he mused.

"Do you know, little Sylvie, that I am going away to-morrow?" Hugh de Brienne asked, as she sat idly feeding the swans.

"And you never told me the secret," she said, resentfully. She had been too proud to suggest it before.

"Yes—I spoke of it once. Sylvie, you will be a year older and a year wiser when I come back."

Sylvie tapped her foot on the stone coping and threw some crumbs half over the pond to make the swans swim after them.

"I shall be past thirteen then."

"And how about the wisdom?"

He looked as if he was teasing her.

"Oh, I do not care about the wisdom. Aunt Barbe was reading something—'In wisdom is sorrow,' I think it was."

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"And you do not like sorrow?"

"Indeed I do not. I have had enough sorrow," and she sighed.

"I think you have, poor child," yet he was amused at the affectation. "When I come back I shall bring you some joys."

She would not ask what the joys were. He wanted to shake the obstinate little thing.

"One will be your mother's fortune."

"Then I should like to buy this place, and live here always. Jaques likes it so much. And Barbe."

"That would be a nice thing to do."

"And then, Sylvie," as she was looking down the magnolia walk, bright with glossy leaves—"then, Sylvie, I shall bring you back your freedom. It would be very hard to be tied all your life to an ugly old fellow."

Sylvie hung her head and flushed scarlet.

"Then you will be a very fortunate young lady, growing up in this quaint old city, sharing pleasures with other girls——"

"But I don't know any girls," she interrupted.

"You will then. I want you to have a happy time, little Sylvie. You will come to know many things and have friends and joys, and an indulgent old guardian who will make life as joyous for you as he knows how. And he hopes then to have a little of your confidence and that you will never feel afraid to ask him for anything you want."

Her head was bent down and the soft light hair hid her face.

"What shall I bring you from Paris?" he asked.

"Nothing," in a slow tone.

"Nothing?"

She sprang up suddenly and flung her arms about his

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neck. "Oh, don't go," she cried, with a long-drawn breath. "Stay here with us; I don't care about the fortune. I am sorry I called you old and ugly!"

CHAPTER XX.

LAURE.

It was very lonely for the little girl when Cousin Hugh went away. She had really no companions. The children who went to the convent and to the French schools were all Catholics. They had festas, they had little plays; most of them had a certain intimacy with the slave children who did all manner of laughable tricks and sang French or Spanish songs to amuse them, and slave nurses who were trained to obey every whim. They took promenades thus attended, but Sylvie was outside of all this. Besides, she was getting to be a large girl. Training Telano did not satisfy her. And it seemed as if Telano had come to the limit of his faculties.

"I suppose," she said, sagely, to Barbe, "that is the great difference between animals and us. They just do the same things over again and seem never to get tired of them. We want something new and different; we want to go on."

"But there are books, *petite*. You have not learned everything out of them."

"I can read English very well. Oh, I wish there were story-books in abundance. I have to make them up myself. I think, what if the swans could talk! And

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the birds, who go to so many different countries. Then the wind sings strange songs through the trees. Oh, Barbe, I wish I had a violin! I am sure I could make beautiful music."

"A violin! A real fiddle! I never heard of such a thing for a girl!" cried Barbe, horrified.

"There was a little black girl down by the levee playing on a fiddle, and her brother, a wee tiny thing, danced——"

"Perhaps you would like to be black, then?" said Barbe, with asperity.

"They have such good times," sighed the child.

"I'm ashamed of you. What do you suppose Monsieur de Brienne would say?"

Sometimes Sylvie thought she would not care a bit what he said.

Gervaise went to business every morning. He was quite an important man. They had never come back to the old freedom of affectionate friendship. She was too big to pet and tease, and not big enough to understand and accept the difference. Then, too, he was preoccupied with his quarrel with Zenobie. She held her head up very straight and bowed in a chilling manner when they passed each other as they often did. He thought her very self-willed and opinionated, he half believed ignorant. Angelique was much broader. Even Hortense was coming to accept the new régime. But then her father was a shrewd business man, and saw in a little while that instead of tyrannous exactions from a far-away government who knew nothing of the needs of its colony, there would be the liberal policy of unhampered trade, and a certain protection against injustice.

Even the young Governor was making himself quite agreeable. To be sure, there was much friction, but the

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feminine part paid little heed to the intricacies of government. There were some very attractive Americans, and while they might rail at them to their own kinsmen, they accepted little attentions when there was no stern male relative to interfere.

So Hortense was less prejudiced. A very charming young lady now, who still petted Sylvie, but adored her less. She had many friends of her own, and there were dances and visits to plantations, birthday festas and saints' days, and walks and drives. Aunt Melanie was sometimes at her wits' end.

"You must choose a husband for Hortense," she said sharply to her brother. "Girls are not what they used to be in my day. She is too much of a coquette."

She did dearly love a bit of fun, and if it outwitted the sharp eyes so continually watching her, she enjoyed it all the more.

Sylvie did not get much entertainment from either of these quasi-friends. Then Gervaise went down to the De Longprés' so often there was no need of Hortense coming up to spend an hour roaming about with the child. For Gervaise was not there to join them.

And Angelique was engrossed with her own affairs. Monsieur Norton was an almost daily visitor, and her attendant when she went out to any pleasure. Barbe played propriety with a rather ill grace at times, it must be confessed; yet she liked him very much. Indeed, Hugh had bespoken his supervision for the household. These excursions up or down the river or on the lakes were a great pleasure to Sylvie, as four were always better company.

So the winter wore away with its holidays and some sharpish, cold weather. Lent began, and everybody, Catholic and Protestant, went to hear Père Antoine at

the cathedral, who preached most eloquent sermons. And though there was a break at Mi-carême, they went back to church-going with devoutness and simplicity.

Spring was early, and there were some tremendous freshets that swept and swirled down the great river, carried away the levees and wrecked the shipping, to say nothing of the plantations that suffered. People went out to view the destruction, and painful stories were told of families that had perished. But everything came out in glory and beauty, such as is only known in Southern countries; and Sylvie Perrier drank in its loveliness, and talked to the trees and the birds, and answered the soft winds that went murmuring by. Fifty years later the little girl would have been a poet, for then education and intelligence were generally diffused; and it was no drawback to be educated and put the knowledge to some use.

She was wandering up and down in the garden one morning, singing to herself. Roses were everywhere, such countless varieties that had never known a florist's art, but seemed to grow and bloom in their riotous fashion for the mere love of being beautiful and generous.

"Mam'selle," said Viny, "there is a visitor. She asks if she may come out to the garden to you, Mam'selle Laure Gorgas."

"Oh, yes!" Sylvie's face was all alight. How long it had been since she had really seen Laure, except to pass her casually! She had heard from Mère Milhet that Laure had begun her novitiate.

"It is the best thing, poor child," Mère Milhet had explained. "You see she had no one. She could never tell whose child she was. And in the convent it would make no difference, they are all children of God. Then there is nothing for such girls to do. The free women of color take up the small industries—hair-dressing and

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the making of gowns and pelisses and caps—when one's own slaves cannot attend to it. To set up a little school would be useless; there are women now who hardly earn their bread. So it was wise in her to seek a home, as she was not likely to marry well."

Laure came forward. Her gown was gray, and she had a small white cap, such as the young girls wore.

"Oh, Laure! What a long while it has been since I have seen you! And—" she studied her with a curious interest—"you have changed mysteriously. You are—perhaps not prettier, but softer, sweeter. You look happier. Oh, Laure, I read in a book only a few days ago that happiness made one beautiful, and I wished everybody could be happy!"

"I shall never be beautiful, Mam'selle, not even when I am the happiest."

"Is it because—oh, Laure, are you glad to be a nun?" in a curious, eager breath.

The girl's figure that had been rather stout was much slimmer, though she had filled out in the shoulders. Her skin was clear, somewhat pale, her eyes a sort of greenish brown, one of the hazel shades. Her nose was short and so was her upper lip, but her teeth were white and even.

"Let us sit down, I have so much to tell you. And I ought to beg your pardon on my knees for something I did a long while ago. I think it made no difference. Your cousin, the Marquis of Brienne, came——"

"Yes, we were all afraid he was dead. It was—yes, it was a great joy."

"And he has gone back to France?"

"He is to return. It is about some estates——"

"You will be rich, Mademoiselle."

Sylvie laughed, doubtfully. "I do not know. I do not care."

"Oh, but you will presently. When you are a real young lady. You did not have to go?"

"No. I could have gone—that is, Cousin Hugh would have taken me, but Angelique did not want to, and I should be afraid to cross the ocean."

There was a silence of some minutes. Laure picked at the white kerchief folded about her shoulders, and her rather pallid face flushed.

"A priest came from France to learn something about you. He was here at the convent."

"Oh, yes," answered Sylvie, indifferently. It seemed almost like a dream to her, but it was one of the secrets with which her small life had been weighted.

"I heard some of the conversation. The Sister knew nothing about you. So many people thought you Mam'selle Angelique's sister with the same name or Monsieur Anbreton's."

Sylvie made no answer, wondering what all this was leading to.

"The Mother Superior was ill. Things were in a kind of confused state. Père Antoine was away. No one seemed to know. Then I asked him some questions——"

Laure's face turned from red to swarthiness.

"Well?" a little impatiently. It seemed to Sylvie a great deal of talk about a matter that was of no account now.

Laure slid down on her knees and caught Sylvie's gown in her hands.

"Oh, Mam'selle, I know it made no difference. He could have learned it elsewhere. It was what was in my heart. I have often felt envious of you. You had so many to love you. You were so indulged. You could do as you liked. And when he, that strange priest, said they wanted to take you back to France, that you had

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been given to a convent, and that was your rightful place, it seemed as if all my prayers for you were going to be answered, and I would help. It was wicked, because I felt if there was no other refuge but a convent for poor me, why should not you and other prosperous people go in them; not simply those who could not help themselves. And I want you to forgive me for the envy and jealousy——”

“Did you really want me to be put in a convent?” said Sylvie, aghast.

“I did then. I was glad to tell. And then all night I tossed about and felt so wretched. I wanted to come and warn you. I went to Père Moras and confessed, and he said I had only done my duty, but that Père Gilbert could have found out without me; that Monsieur Lavalette knew all about the household. But it seems there was some mistake. I asked about it afterward. And I found they did not take you away, and that tall, dark cousin came who was a marquis. I saw you out afterward——”

“It was very mean in you, Laure! What had I ever done to you that you should want me shut up in a convent? And to be sent to France——”

Sylvie wanted to shake off the hands that were clutching her gown.

“Oh, it was worse than that, wicked in the extreme! Oh, Mam’selle, if you had known how many nights I just knelt on the floor and prayed and prayed that no evil might happen to you, and that you might be, oh, very happy! And now I am going away. I am going to have a new life. I have learned so many things about love and God and the Blessed Virgin and real religion. But I couldn’t go without telling you this and begging your forgiveness——”

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The weeping, drooping figure appealed to Sylvie. She had been very naughty and obdurate as well. And she would have liked to see Zenobie put in a convent, because Gervaise fancied her.

"Oh, Laure, don't cry! You see it didn't make any difference at all. It was a mistake—it was about something else, and—and Cousin Hugh is coming back, and—people can't be good right along. No one is."

Then she held out her hands and smiled, so sweet a smile it warmed the other's heart.

"Sit here and tell me where you are going."

"Oh, Mam'selle, maybe this is all wrong; but it can't be if all goes as we have planned, and the good Lord puts no obstacle in the way. That is just how we have left it. I am going away from the convent to be a true mother to a sweet little girl, and—and a wife to a young man I love very much."

"Oh, Laure!" in utter amazement.

"Don't think ill of me, Mam'selle Sylvie," pleaded the broken voice.

"Ill! Why, Laure, it is just lovely. Oh, tell me all about it!" and Sylvie caught the passive hand in her eagerness.

"I wanted to. There is no one else, and I thought if you forgave me, I could tell it all to you. Why, Mam'selle, if it was to save you any pain or trouble now, I'd walk through the fire for you! And when Mère Milhet tells the story and accuses me of ingratitude, you will know how it was. Mère Milhet has been very good to me. I might have been half beaten to death and turned out to starve. I couldn't have been sold for a slave, because I was white; but many a slave had a better home. If I had been pretty, Mère Milhet might have liked me for a sort of daughter. She was very good to me, and

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I was grateful enough until she began to talk about my being a nun. From the very first I hated it. I should have run away, but I could not tell where to go. There are so many cruel people in the world. I was afraid. So I just went on and on, and tried to be good, and was wicked, and repented; and last year she planned to have me begin my novitiate. I had no dowry; I was not pretty, and no one would want to marry me—that is, no one worth having, she thought. But when the girls went away from school, and had lovers, and were married, it seemed hard to be shut out. For I was willing enough to work. And I used to wish the times of the casket girls were back again, and you could go where some nice kindly man wanted you, and you could keep his house, and make him happy, and care for his children when they came, and love him.”

She drew a long breath she had talked so fast. Sylvie's eyes were shining in the most beautiful, tender light imaginable, and inspired her.

“There was a baby brought to the convent whose mother had just died, and whose father was to go away on quite a long voyage. I begged to take care of it, it was so small and helpless. And then I began to love it so. I used to think if its father never came back, and it could grow up in the convent and be mine, I would be quite willing to be a nun. But its father came and went. He had a two years' engagement with this sea captain. A fortnight ago that was at an end, and then he told me he was going East to his native city, where he had a better chance for business, and would take his little girl and settle. Oh, Mam'selle, I felt as if some one had suddenly struck me down. I wanted to die. I think I said I could not live if the baby was taken away. I just cried all night long. She loves me. Her little baby hands

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were so sweet. Her eyes are blue, not so beautiful as yours, but tender and loving. And her lips so full of delicious kisses! When he came again we happened to be alone, and he told me what he had been thinking of. Americans are so different, you know; and then I had no mother or father that he could consult. Mère Milhet would not have understood him. And he said since I loved the baby so much, and she loved me, and that it would be a pity to separate us, so why should he not marry me. He had thought a great deal about me, and he was quite sure he could take good care of me and make me very happy. Oh, Sylvie! I was so afraid at first that it was wrong to desire to be happy. And then when I looked at the dreary little nun's cell, the long years spent in teaching children and caring for the sick—it is all good work and God's work, but some may like it better than others. It would be a great trial to me, a continual fight. And Sunday the good Père Antoine preached such a lovely sermon about our ingratitude in refusing any happiness God sent us. So then I gave in. I told him last night I would go. I am to be the baby's nurse. And when we get to Baltimore we shall be married, and then I will be her mother. Oh, I wonder if it is wicked? He is not of my Church, but we will be married by a priest. And there are so many Catholic people in Baltimore that I shall not feel at all strange, he says. One of the Sisters will go down to the boat with me; and when it is ready to start he will take her off, and he knows how to manage it so there will be no trouble. I am to wear my Sister's dress all the time on the boat. He will be busy, he has so much to do; but then I shall see him. Oh, Mam'selle, wish me good luck. You escaped the pirates and everything; and if you give me the wish, I know I shall go safely, and because you

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were so good as to forgive me when I meant you ill. I was unhappy all the time; but now I should not wish any one ill, not even the woman who used to beat me. I want all the world to be happy."

"Oh, you will, you will! And I will pray every day—it is to the same God, you know. And you will always be good to the little girl? What is her name?"

"Oh, Mam'selle, you won't be vexed, but I coaxed him to have her christened Angelique. She looks so like an angel with a crown of yellow curls and blue eyes. I always call her that. And I shall always think of you. I am glad I know how to write; and if you will be pleased, I will send you a letter from Baltimore."

"Oh, I should like it above all things!"

"And now I must go. If it had not been so far, I should have brought the little one."

"Oh, I should like to see her. When are you going?"

"This evening at four. Oh, Mam'selle, *do* you think it wrong?" in an imploring tone, longing for the comfort of assurance.

"No," answered Sylvie, stoutly, from the depths of her immature judgment.

"Oh, thank you a thousand times. Might I kiss you just once before I go?"

Sylvie clasped her arms about the other's neck, and kissed her, not once, but a dozen times.

"And you won't forget the letter!"

"Oh, no, no! Oh, Mam'selle, may you be very, very happy."

Sylvie sat quite still on the bench after she was gone. Poor Laure! How hard she had tried to be a *religieuse* no one knew. Sylvie had a vague impression, but she was too young to formulate any comprehensive idea. Only Laure had been longing for love all her life; and

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no one had really loved her until she came to the little baby, Angelique Clark. It seemed such an odd name, as if two nationalities met in it. Sylvie had seen the baby months ago, but the knowledge of *how* Laure loved it seemed to fill and thrill every pulse in her body. And presently she would go away to a new life, to a new country!

Telano came, and thrust his head in her lap, then up in her very neck.

"No, I can't tell even you, Telano, until, well—to-morrow morning maybe. If any one knew, it might all be spoiled. Birds in the air carry secrets, I have heard. Oh, what if some of them listened to Laure!"

She turned pale with affright, and glanced about suspiciously.

"Whatever did Laure Gorgas have to talk about so long?" asked Barbe when Sylvie came in.

"I'll tell you to-morrow," said the child. "I just want to think it over and over."

"She is almost through with her novitiate, isn't she?"

"Yes, I believe so," was the rather vague reply.

"Did she want you to come down to the convent?"

"Oh, no."

Barbe felt relieved.

"Jaques," Sylvie said, as it was growing dusk, "walk a little ways down the road with me."

"Why, what for?"

"To meet Monsieur Norton."

"What a queer idea! He will be here soon."

"I want to see him," authoritatively.

Jaques took her hand. He always kept in mind Monsieur de Brienne's charge.

The young man came along with a swinging step. "Hello!" he exclaimed, in his forcible English.

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"Will you go down to the Convent of the Ursulines, and inquire if Laure Gorgas came back?"

"Came back—from where?" in astonishment.

"That is what I want to know, Monsieur. You need not ask any other question. And—hurry, please."

"Well, this is queer, little lady."

"Angelique won't mind," she said, consolingly. Then she turned Jaques about. "It is queer, Sylvie. What do you mean?" he asked.

Sylvie laughed wilfully.

In a little more than half an hour Norton returned. Barbe and the two girls were in the gallery.

"What do you think, *ma mie*, Sylvie," he began. "Laure Gorgas and one of the Sisters went down to the levee to take a child belonging to the mate of The Guardian, who has been at the convent nearly two years. And as they came off the gang-plank the Sister took some one's arm, and she did not see that it was not Laure's. She watched after the boat had pulled out, but no Laure came. And in her room on the pillow they found a slip of paper, saying that she had gone away for good. I suppose we would say she had eloped. Well, I can't imagine a nun's life would be very exciting."

"What a shocking thing! Sylvie, did you know about it? If this is the sort of training the nuns get—to deceive, to go off no one knows where—what a wretch! Was that what she talked about all the morning?"

Sylvie came and put her arms about Barbe's neck in a pleading, caressing fashion.

"You must not call her that," she said, with sweet gravity. "She loved the little baby so much, and the baby's father wanted her to be its mother. And Laure had no one to love her; no one at all, for Mère Milhet did not really care, you know, or she would have wanted

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Laure to live with her always, and not put her in a convent. Think of having no one at all!"

Sylvie gave a little sighing sob.

"There, there! Well, I hope it will all be as she believes. But it's queer she should come and tell you."

"Why, you have had part in quite a romance," laughed Roger Norton. "Poor girl, I hope all will go right with her." He and Barbe exchanged glances; they knew how many wrongs there were in the world.

"Of course, it will go right," declared Sylvie, confidently.

It was true that a little love on Mère Milhet's part might have transformed Laure into a grateful daughter. But Mère Milhet was proud of her ancestry, and no one could tell about this waif. Already the poor whites were falling below the level of the slaves, unless some fortunate circumstance drew them out of the slough. Beauty might, but it was a dangerous inheritance. A man with energy could make a position for himself, but for a poor and friendless young girl there was the respectability of the convent or the ostracism of the other course.

Mère Milhet was indignant, and the good Sisters were shocked. Sylvie held on to her faith, and was one day rewarded by a letter. She was not critical as to the spelling, but who could always be correct amid such a jargon as language was getting to be?

They had reached Baltimore, and she had been married by a priest of her own Church. There was a pretty house and garden, only three rooms, but, oh, so delightful! And now Monsieur Clark was going only from Baltimore to New York, and would be home frequently. He was delighted with her housekeeping, and loved her very fondly. The baby was well and so cunning, and Laure

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was brimming over with happiness. She was trying to be good every moment, in very gratitude. And she never said things any more that were not quite true, for Monsieur Clark was very honest and upright and tender, and she wanted to please him in every respect.

There were letters, too, from Cousin Hugh. Paris was full of excitement and glory. The First Consul had been proclaimed Emperor, and that was the end of the republic and consulate. There was no grand atmosphere of liberty and equal rights, except in the New World. He should be prouder than ever to be an American citizen on his return. His stay might be longer than he thought, for everything was in disorder. All the countries appeared to be at war with one another, and the Corsican seemed likely to conquer half of Europe, for his ambitions were boundless. Sylvie must write to him and tell him how the great garden looked; and if Telano was well, what she was learning, and if she had any new friends.

"Oh, I wish he would come back," she sighed.

Roger Norton wished it as well. It was very pleasant to be haunting the old house, to walk in the garden, to read aloud and watch Angel's kindling eyes, to feel that she was capable of grasping some of the higher and finer truths of life. For he, like the young governor, was puzzled at many characteristics of the people who were to make the new town. "We must be initiated into the sacred duties of freemen and the practices of liberty," said M. Poydras, who was a man beyond his time. Loyalty comprehended obedience to laws, in his estimation; but one of the tremendous sins of the time was smuggling, another slave-stealing. Even the dames one met at the balls or dinners rehearsed with triumph some daring exploit of an ancestor. The tangled waterways of the southern coast, Grande Terre at the entrance of Barataria

Bay, the bayous of La Fourche and Terre Bonne were full of hiding-places for pirates and smugglers, called privateers by courtesy. Many a wild romance celebrates the lives of the brothers Lafitte and the captains of marvellous deeds, Dominique You and Belouche.

It was hard work making headway against Spanish beliefs and civilizations; for it was not to be a French or Spanish province, but an American State when it should reach an adequate population. There would have to be pioneers in the moral as well as the material sense. And even then there was a curious misgiving about slavery. On this point Norton was glad his betrothed agreed with him. Barbe was horrified with the system, and yet she felt most of the slaves were more comfortable than if left to themselves. That would precipitate anarchy at once. And there must be some one to work.

There was another embarrassment in a social point of view. This was a long engagement, a matter that was little in favor among the best classes. But he could not well hurry Angelique away from her home, and the other alternative was rather awkward.

As for Gervaise, he was much comforted by Hortense. And although she seemed less coquettish than Zenobie, and very frank and innocent in her girlish ardor, she did some credit to Aunt Melanie's training. She was not in love with Gervaise, for, although he came of "good family," he was poor. Hugh de Brienne was alive, and possessor of all the remaining estates. And so when a certain Alphonse Mazant, possessing a large plantation on Lake Maurepas and various other properties, began to be seriously devoted to Aunt Melanie, she wondered whether it was wise to go further and, perhaps, fare worse. Then it would be a great delight to her to be married before Zenobie.

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But Zenobie was not passed by. A young Spaniard, whose family had made a fortune in privateering, but who was not really admired by Madame, and a much older man, well-to-do and a widower, besought her hand.

"I don't want to marry an old man," she said, pettishly. "And I don't like the Spanish. They are so jealous and arbitrary. Papa, there are delightful French people. And Claire is so happy."

So both lovers were dismissed. Zenobie was rather piqued that Gervaise should have so taken her at her word and transferred his visits to Hortense. She did not know how sharp a lookout Aunt Melanie kept, and that Henri was a great source of attraction as well, since they were both studying the new order of civil government. She was quite cool to Hortense, who always managed to say some teasing things under a great show of innocent sweetness.

One evening, when gay groups were wandering down along the river banks, where willow and china trees and sedgy blossoms sent trailing shadows over the river, Madame Lavalette and her daughter paused to ask if anything had been heard of that poor misguided girl who had fled from the convent, and was really pleased to learn that she was lawfully married and well settled.

"And she wrote Sylvie a very nice letter," answered Gervaise. Then he glanced up at Zenobie.

"Is it true that Hortense is to be betrothed? Oh, you needn't both neglect me," with some resentment.

"Yes, to Monsieur Mazant. I only heard it an hour ago. I was quite surprised."

"Monsieur Mazant?" Then she looked at him out of eyes that had a sudden gleam of satisfaction in them.

"Oh, you did not think——"

"How very warm it is!" said Zenobie, flirting her fan.

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CHAPTER XXI.

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"THOU should'st have a husband by this time, Mam'selle," said Monsieur Poydras. "Thy sister is fulfilling her destiny nobly, and is very happy."

"I am wilful," Zenobie said, in a sweet, apologetic tone. "Those who would have me I do not want, and those——"

"Nay, Mam'selle, thou hast too good sense to choose unwisely," was the grave reply.

She had been making an afternoon visit with her sister and brother-in-law. They had all been out to the cotton gin, and Eugene was still talking of the wonderful invention.

"Monsieur Poydras, if a fine young man is poor, a girl may choose unwisely. If she despises the man, but takes him and the money, it is—wisdom."

"The money is a very good thing, but not all. I was a poor young man myself. So that is the way it stands, Mam'selle. Thy father can give thee a good dowry."

He smiled encouragingly.

"Ah, but if the young man will not speak because he is poor? And though papa admires him, and he is well-born and well-mannered, I think he would object. Mamma would not approve. And so I wait."

She sighed softly, delicately, and her eyes were down-cast.

"And you love him, Mam'selle?"

"It would hardly be maidenly to love until I was asked. But I could, and it would make me very happy."

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"I should like to know of the young man. Is he an American?"

"Oh, no; French. They fled from France some years ago. You have met his cousin, Mam'selle Saucier, who is betrothed to the American, and the pretty golden-haired Mam'selle Sylvie."

"Ah, ah," and he nodded. "Yes, I have met him, Monsieur Aubreton. He is a fine young fellow, but of a different faith?"

"He would not be if——"

She blushed, and hung her head.

"Well, we must see. There are plenty of chances for a young man of energy. And it is best for young people to marry before they are given over to other things. It is a great thing for people to be happy like your sister."

The others were coming up. Zenobie's heart was all in a flutter. How had she dared be so frank? And she wondered more than ever why she should have cared for Gervaise Aubreton. There was something about him so different from most of the young men she met, the new, enthusiastic life. But, oh, how angry little Sylvie would be!

Sylvie said one Sunday morning, "I don't see why you go to the cathedral, now that we have a chapel of our own."

There had been a small Protestant chapel built, now that Spain's hand had been removed.

"I like Père Antoine. And the music. Henri and I walk down together," returned Gervaise.

She did not suspect Zenobie Lavalette any more.

Hortense was delighted with her own wedding. Her gowns were the prettiest that could be had; Aunt Melanie looked after that. And there were some jewels that had been her mother's, some handsome gifts from her

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father. And it did her foolish little heart a great deal of good to think she should be married before Zenobie.

"Zenobie is kind of stiff and grand, and some day she will have the gift of a comb and St. Catharine's hair will be ready for her."

"But why?" queried Sylvie.

"Oh, that is what unmarried women do," and Hortense laughed. "Little one, it will soon be time for you to think of lovers."

"I am not going to have any."

"But you cannot make love to a crane all your life! And presently one begins to grow old."

It was a grand wedding, and Gervaise was one of the attendants. Just then some wonderful good fortune happened to Gervaise. Monsieur Poydras discussed his capabilities with Monsieur Norton, and proffered him a fine position.

"I don't know how to thank you," he said, gratefully, to Norton. "Of course, it was your influence."

"Why, not altogether. He had his eye on you. It is a chance out of a thousand. Before you are gray-haired you will be one of the solid men of the town, unless there come a fire or a pestilence or a deluge from the mighty river, or a general ruin."

Gervaise laughed gayly. Then he laid his case before M. Lavalette, who had always taken a very kindly interest in the young fellow.

Madame Lavalette was not quite so buoyant. To be sure, he was cousin to a marquis, but even the Marquis de Marigny, elegant, aristocratic, witty, and charming, not infrequently laid aside his title. And as a part of this new United States, which she really did not admire, there would soon be no distinctions.

Zenobie came down one day bent on charming every-

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body. She paid a pretty deference to Madame Champe, she had a dainty respect, like that of a younger sister, for Mam'selle Saucier, and to Sylvie she was irresistible. She petted the crane, who really was very amiable; she read Laure Gorgas's letter, and was glad she was so happy. She was doing some beautiful needlework which she brought along, and she praised Sylvie's English reading, though she could not understand half of it. The French verses delighted her.

"Oh, what a wise little body you are!" she said, with a soft ripple of merriment. "You will soon be as learned as M. Poydras, and you are so young too."

"Now you are laughing at me."

"No. You are a charming little thing. And at first I had made up my mind not to like you at all. Laure Gorgas said so much about you. And Hortense was so extravagant."

"And I said I never would like you." Sylvie looked up out of clear, laughing eyes.

"I want you to like me very much," and Zenobie's tone had a sweet seriousness in it. "I want to be like an older sister to you. And when I have a home of my own you must come and spend days and days, just as you do with Claire."

"Oh, that will be delightful," the child said, innocently.

"And if I should marry and have a little girl, I should call her Sylvie. And if there were two, the next one should be Angelique."

"I wish I wasn't too old to have dolls," said Sylvie, irrelevantly.

The next time she went up to Lavalette she found Félice had improved very much. Only there was no one just her age, and somehow she felt a lonely little girl with all the pleasures and all the beauty there was in the

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world. Every one had some person to love her supremely. Monsieur Norton adored Angel, and Angel loved him. He was to be her husband. The thought brought back Sylvie's bitter grief when she had first learned that Gervaise could be only her friend; alas, that he cared to be nothing more! Of course, it would have been very unfortunate if he had—only—she was to be quite free from the dreadful complication.

But down in the bottom of her heart she knew she did not love Gervaise as Angel loved M'sieu Norton. Why, sometimes she thought she liked him quite as well as Gervaise, who seemed to consider her still a little girl, and not capable of understanding reasons for incidents or actions. M'sieu Norton always explained things so beautifully. She used to lie in the hammock, and listen as he read aloud to Angel. One story interested her so much—it was about the wanderings of a man called Ulysses and all his curious adventures. Gervaise did not care much for poetry nowadays. Then there was "Télémaque," that she was reading in the French.

And now Gervaise was going up to Lavalette continually.

"Oh, Angel, suppose Gervaise should want to marry Zenobie some day?" she cried, suddenly, as she sat sewing one morning.

"Well?" returned Angelique, softly.

"I could not bear that; indeed, I could not."

"But if he loved her?"

"He would have to be a Catholic."

"I suppose your friend, Laure's husband, was not a Catholic?"

Sylvie wondered about that.

"Think how many of your splendid heroes were Catholics. De Tonti and La Salle and De Bienville and Galvez

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and many another. To be good and true and noble and self-sacrificing and loving belong to all religions. And if a hundred or so years ago we had remained Catholics, we should fraternize with them now. Most of France is Catholic. And it is the religion of the greater part of the province."

Sylvie opened her eyes very wide.

"We learn to tolerate each other's beliefs when we are truly Christian."

Yet Angelique gave a little sigh. She did not like this departure from a faith that had been signalized in martyrdom. Still, Gervaise was very much in love with Zenobie. Claire was making such an excellent wife and mother. She had thought at first that she could not love an American, and now she was looking forward hopefully to a long life with Roger Norton.

Sylvie put up her sewing, and went down to the lake, where she wept a few sorrowful tears. For though Gervaise did not love her dearly, to give him to some one else was very hard. And she thought if it were any one but Zenobie! Angelique had some delightful young lady friends.

Then she had a new pleasure. Monsieur Norton brought her a guitar; and a sweet-voiced Creole woman, who had lost her husband, and who played at evening parties, came for a teacher. Why had no one thought of it before? And now the little girl was supremely happy. Tityrus, playing on his oaten stops in copses and by the water-side to the reeds and rushes, was not a whit happier with his "tiptoe throng" than the little modern girl by her copse, where the birds stopped to listen, and often sent back a saucy, merry lilt.

Hugh de Brienne sent a Godspeed to his young cousin, who had written him with all the enthusiasm of a young

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lover, and gave consent as the head of the house. But Sylvie would not go to the betrothal.

"So you mean never to forgive me?" said Gervaise, upbraidingly. "I did the best I could through all that critical time. And, Sylvie, you will always be dear to me. Zenobie is ready to love you, and it seems unkind to hold out so long"—"to be so obstinate" he would rather have said.

"I can't go." There was a pitiful dreariness in her tone. "I will come and see you married, and then I will try to love Zenobie, but I can't now."

"Do you really suppose she cared so much for me?" Gervaise asked Angel, in a conscience-stricken fashion. "Ought I to have waited until she was older, and married her? Though I could never love any one as I love Zenobie."

"Oh, no, no. It is unfortunate that Sylvie has been so much with grown people and so little with children. In two or three years we will have her blooming out into girlhood. Why," and Angelique blushed while an adorable softness made her eyes luminous, "as a little girl I adored Hugh, but now I am in love and realize the difference."

Both laughed softly.

"Let her take her own way and her own time."

So Angelique and Roger went to the betrothal, which was very delightful. And Monsieur Poydras sent the fiancée a gift "from his full heart," he wrote. There was nothing he so much liked as seeing young people happy.

Long afterward, when M. Poydras had done a good deal in the way of serving his State, for that it became in 1812, he died as he had lived, nobly, calmly. There were many generous benefactions in his will, though he did not neglect his few remaining relatives. One of the most

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beautiful and poetic was the sum of \$30,000 to be set aside for each of the parishes, Pointe Coupée and West Baton Rouge, the interest to be devoted yearly to young girls without fortunes who had married during the year. And Gervaise Aubreton was always proud to know he owed prosperity and happiness in part to such a grand and generous heart.

They had to wait quite a while for the wedding, however. One thing and another prevented Hugh from returning. There was a good deal of difficulty in claiming the De Chatilly estates, and only a husband could have succeeded under the French law. As for his own, there was not so much left of that, but he would be able to give Angelique a little dowry; and as for himself, there were chances in the New World, and he was not afraid.

But Gervaise could not be married and leave the household without any male relative. However, Zenobie took it very sweetly and cheerfully, for was not Angelique in the same position? True, Hugh had sent word to her not to keep Roger waiting, and sent her a legal consent and the amount of her dowry.

"It is very generous and thoughtful in him," said Angelique, "but I shall wait until his return. And I think my dowry comes out of his own small estate, which is hardly fair."

Roger took the paper, read it carefully, and then deliberately tore it in little strips.

"There will be no dowry," he said, smilingly. "And there will be no marriage until he is here to give me my bride."

"Oh, Roger!" she cried in a sweet, exultant tone. And though girls were chary of caresses in those days, perhaps Angelique had been spoiled a little by American fashions

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—she put her soft, fair arms about his neck, and kissed him.

Zenobie came down after the betrothal, and was so especially winsome that Sylvie had hard work to resist her.

“Of course, I shall like you presently,” she said, in her quaint, distant fashion. “But I can’t be hurried.”

“You have liked me all along. And though I haven’t made as much fuss as Hortense, and called you all sorts of endearing names, I do care a great deal for you. You are to be a dear little sister to both of us. I can’t bear to think I shall make any disturbance.”

“But you will not,” said Sylvie.

“Claire is fond of Eugene’s sisters, and is never jealous of them. And I shall not be.”

“Oh, I could stay away if you were,” Sylvie returned, provokingly. “I shall stay at home a great deal, anyhow. Barbe will be so lonesome. And I have my guitar.”

“I shall come to see you then.”

There was a great deal of interest in the town. A constitution was being formed, there was a great dispute between Father Antoine and the Vicar-General about some old religious privileges, and another matter that nearly rent the young interest, where the bonds of union were still slender and but illy understood. The old scheme of an independent country was revived, and Wilkinson again coquetted with both sides. Aaron Burr came down the Mississippi “in an elegant barge” with letters from Wilkinson to the Governor and others, and was most graciously received. A banquet was given in his honor and various courtesies showered upon him. Governor Claiborne was ill at ease. A body of Spaniards from Pensacola on their way to Baton Rouge asked permission

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to pass through the city, which was refused; and then came the startling news that Colonel Burr had arrived at a point near Natchez with an expedition bent on conquest. All the disaffection of New Orleans was expected to burst out in a blaze.

But the people of New Orleans, the Creoles mostly, had accepted the American government, and now stood loyally by it. Burr was arrested at Natchez, and escaped; the expedition was dispersed. History and romance have made much of this startling interest in which Herman Blennerhassett and his devoted wife, Margaret, Burr and his lovely daughter, Theodosia, figured. Wilkinson betrayed Burr's plans to the general government, and he was arrested for treason. Again the plan had failed.

Nearly two years had elapsed before Hugh de Brienne's return. Ocean travel was in the worst possible condition. England proclaimed herself mistress of the seas. Privateers scoured every ocean route, and were especially bad in the Gulf. There was so much harbor for them in the numerous islands and bayous.

For all that he came in safely, and was met by his two friends, Gervaise Anbreton and Roger Norton. The latter was at the period of young manhood when the years bring little change; but Gervaise betrayed immeasurable improvement, having been incited thereto by both love and ambition.

"All the compliments are not due to me," laughed Gervaise, flushing boyishly. "Do you ever consult a mirror, Cousin Hugh? For you look five years younger than when you went away, and you have grown positively handsome."

Hugh smiled. "I have not been roughing it in pioneer life, but accepting the luxuries of higher civilization. Paris is wonderful under its new Emperor, who is cer-

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tainly a remarkable man. But through all these months of waiting America has held my heart and its affection. There is trouble enough in store for her, there are many governments that would be glad to throttle her aspiring liberty, and are ready to predict her downfall. But I feel more than ever assured that she will weather the gale and keep to clear sailing. It is high time I returned, however, since neither of you heeded my request."

"We shall be glad to defer to your lightest wishes now," returned Norton, with cordial frankness.

"It was very generous in you, if Gervaise did grow impatient."

"Oh, I am more sensible. I know my duty."

"And now we shall soon have things settled."

"But what changes already!" Hugh exclaimed, as they were picking their way out, for it seemed as if the streets were in a worse condition than ever with the increased traffic. "And your Spanish-French have not rebelled? Spain has been threatening."

"Oh, we have come near several *émeutes*. No, I think the people have accepted frankly. Governor Claiborne has had trouble and perplexity on every side, but I believe he will succeed. The Spanish agents, the quarrelsome Morales, and Caso Calvo have been expelled; our magnificent idea of a middle empire has again come to nought; this time received its quietus, I think."

Roger laughed, and glanced meaningly at De Brienne. For once they had been caught by the project.

"They are watching us closely on the other side, and predict all sorts of license from self-government. But—what was this?"

"It will be hard to get at the real story. There are always adventurers ready to take up any cause. Burr, no doubt, was at the head. How large a hand Wilkinson

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had in it no one will quite know, but in the end he was loyal to the Governor. And the Creoles are loyal too. I think we shall have no trouble with them, while they do not admire us;" and a convincing smile crossed the fine, strong face. "They will always have a sentimental love for France; but this casting them off a second time, selling them, rankles deep. There are many fine citizens among them. And you can see that New Orleans is the key to the Western traffic."

"It would have made a magnificent empire, if you choose to call it that; but left the whole country largely at the mercy of its foes. It is much better this way. We must make ourselves respected abroad, perhaps feared. There is a great work before the people of these United States."

As they walked on, many familiar sights met his gaze amid the improvements. The broken roof lines, the odd angles and gables, the blackened roofs with patches of moss and lichen, the narrow doorways on the lower floor, and the balconies above full of richest bloom. It was not a French city in the sense that Paris was. There were costumes of almost every description, complexions of almost every hue, and, as usual, a conglomeration of languages. Sailors, rough boatmen, slaves, and the stately Creole masters passed like visions. And the women struck him as being less artificial, as if there was some rare richness and luxuriance that partook of the superb redundancy of foliage and flower. Had it softened the dark eyes and made them more fascinating, brought a richer color to the cheek, a gayety to the smile? Ah, yes, this was the country for one to live in and enjoy life!

Surely he had no need to question his welcome. Barbe gave him a motherly greeting, and tears shone in her

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honest, relieved eyes, that of late had indicated that her burden had not been a light one. Angelique greeted him with sisterly cordiality, but Sylvie stood a little shy and strange.

"But you are so much stouter, Monsieur," exclaimed Barbe. "And it agrees well with you. There is an air——"

"Do not tell him it is the atmosphere of royalty, or we shall have Monsieur le Marquis putting on airs. See how soon Paris outgrew equality and the once delightful 'citizen'! We are trying to outgrow the other."

"But you have changed wonderfully, Monsieur," said Angelique. "You resemble the portrait of your father in the old château."

"I have brought some of the family heirlooms with me. The people of St. Eudor had taken possession of Brienne; and that, perhaps, saved it from destruction. We came to an amicable arrangement—perhaps it is as well for them to have it. So I packed up a few things that were sacred to me. And now I hardly see how Father Gilbert gave up the agreement so readily; but he had been so confident of my death that it took him utterly by surprise, and for a moment he lost his astuteness—a lucky moment for me," and Hugh smiled.

There were so many explanations to make that they sat out in the court in the starlight until nearly midnight.

"Thou hast been very brave and heroic," Hugh said to Angel. "I thank thee for thy patience. I should have been not a little sorry had any other hand than mine given thee away."

"I think it has been harder for Gervaise, for a man is naturally more impatient," she returned, smilingly, raising her sweet eyes to his.

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"What, then, about Roger?"

Angelique colored scarlet. "But he is older. He has waited for many things."

"We must see about weddings at once."

Hugh de Brienne's return created not a little stir. Even then, when titles were much more plenty, there was a certain respect paid to them. And he was the acknowledged head of the family.

He called upon Monsieur Lavalette at once, and speedy arrangements were made. Madame Lavalette received him with delight, and Zenobie was certainly very charming; so much so that Sylvie felt a little jealous, for now she was beginning to like Cousin Hugh extremely.

So there was a grand wedding at the cathedral, even the Governor and several of his aides being present. For Governor Claiborne was doing his best to study the perplexing Creole character, so unlike the Virginian French he had known. And a beautiful couple they were in their youth and sweetness. Sylvie was one of the maids. She had resisted Angelique's persuasion, but she yielded to Cousin Hugh, who did not seem at all annoyed at Gervaise taking up his wife's religious faith.

After this there was a quiet wedding in the old house; but Sylvie felt that it should have been in a grand church, the bride was so lovely. Roger Norton proved inflexible on the subject of a dowry, but Hugh made Angelique accept some exquisite jewels that were handed down as heirlooms for generations afterward.

Roger had his house furnished for his bride, and they set up housekeeping. Zenobie and Gervaise had been well provided for, and Hugh out of his shrunken fortunes had been very generous. He did not think he would be likely to marry, but he begged Barbe and Jaques to go on as usual, since Sylvie needed the care and companion-

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ship. Angelique had proposed taking her; she would soon be a young lady and need society.

"I do not want to go away from this dear old house and garden," she declared, vehemently. "Cousin Hugh, you said I had some fortune; would it be enough to buy it? And then we might live here always. I love Angelique, but she has Roger——"

He studied her a moment or two. She had grown considerably taller, though she was still petite; but she had a dignified manner that in some moods made her seem much larger and quite impressive. The eyes held their exquisite blue; he understood how, in years to come, they might prove a man's undoing when she looked at him with that fearless, innocent sweetness. Her hair was still golden, and the little tendrils about her forehead seemed playing hide-and-seek with the pink and pearl of her complexion. There was an enchanting half reserve, half frankness, about her that made the little moods and tempers very captivating.

"The house?" he repeated, in a dreamy sort of way. "Why, Sylvie, I had thought of that myself. I am not rich, to be sure, but I am tired of rambling about. This charming old house and garden suits me. I could grow old here without any regret. And I shall be a citizen of this grand new country always. I like this province, because it is French and because it is so beautiful and full of romance. And from the upper windows one can catch glances of the mighty river, and imagine De Soto coming down. One could build a sort of tower at one end, and make some improvements——"

"But I want the house. And then Barbe and Jaques can stay here always with me," she interrupted, holding herself up with a graceful importance.

"And I——"

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"Well, you could stay. Did you not tell Barbe that you were to be my guardian? Oh, you could build the tower and have your books and pictures and queer things, and it would not make any difference. I want something of my very own. Gervaise and Angelique have gone, and I can never have them again." Her voice fell to a pitiful pathos. "And some day you may marry like the others——"

"No, I shall not marry. That was why I wanted the house. But you may. You know, Sylvie, I told you that you were quite free from that blunder that *ma mère* thought for the best, and about which you had no choice."

"But I was very fond of Gervaise then," she commented, with lingering sadness.

Had she really loved the bright, attractive young fellow more than any one dreamed?

"And you are an heiress."

"An heiress means having plenty of money, does it not? Then," with charming wilfulness, "if I could marry whoever I liked, why could I not have a pretty old home if I liked that better?"

She stood before him the triumphant impersonation of incontrovertible logic.

"Why, you could, of course. I shall have to find investments for your money."

"Then buy this house first."

"What if I want it myself?"

Her bosom swelled. Her eyes had a mistiness that made them enchanting.

"Can't I have anything at all that I want? Then what is the use of being an heiress or anybody? The slaves have to do just what another person tells them, and——"

She gave a long sigh like a sob. Her utter indifference to his desires amused him, and yet he felt a little provoked.

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"But if you should want to turn me out some day, when I have grown old and queer?"

"Angel says you grow younger all the time. And if you keep going back—— Could people really go back?"

"Why, then I shall be quite a boy."

"I think I like you best as you are. And you really are not ugly any more. You have a dimple in your chin, and the wrinkles have gone out of your cheeks. Yes, stay just as you are."

"And you will let me have the house?"

"No, no, no!" She ran away, laughing.

CHAPTER XXII.

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THERE was no doubt but New Orleans had a great future before it. Plantations were enlarged. Cotton and sugar-cane spread out into what had been considered waste lands. It seemed as if one could not go amiss in investments. But plantations required slaves, and Hugh de Brienne was opposed to trafficking in them. Then there were stores and houses and warehouses to build. Oh, there were plenty of ways for money. He was careful and very, very honest; and he would not see his little ward defrauded of a penny.

But it was rather perplexing and amusing to see how persistently Sylvie recurred to her idea about the house.

"Jaques made the little lake on purpose for me, and he has widened the stream, and bought the white pelicans for me. They are so fond of this shaded secret

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place. And he set out new oleanders to extend the walk as you see. And here is a jasmine bower, where I come and play on my guitar sometimes and read verses. Have you any books of verses? And one day he was going to cut down those two great pine-trees, because they were so old, and I would not let him. And if the place is mine, I can do as I like with it all. But you may build the tower. I should like that."

Monsieur Lavalette agreed at length to sell the place and the fifty or more acres stretching out to the north and west, now a tangle of figs and wild oranges. Cultivation would make it profitable. He wanted to build some warehouses down on the levee that was being reclaimed.

De Brienne considered some time before he could actually decide to vest the ownership in Sylvie, but he saw that it would be a heartbreaking disappointment. After all, when Sylvie came to have a husband whose interests would be elsewhere, she would relinquish it easily, no doubt. He had never been especially fond of Brienne, but this spot went to his heart.

So he made Sylvie delightfully happy presently. Then they planned the addition. It was to have two large rooms and a tower above the second story. These would be Cousin Hugh's.

"And the tower shall have plenty of windows and a balcony where we can look at the stars. I am sure I never saw them so beautiful as they are here, though I have watched them at night in the northern countries, when they seemed fairly to sparkle with frost. And I slept on a bed of pine boughs with a buffalo skin over me."

"Oh, tell me all about it!"

She had an insatiable love for adventures. All the country up above became a land of romance to her, and

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was peopled with heroes. The sad and bloody experiences he kept back, but there was enough to interest a little girl without detailing the cruelties. He was very fond of watching her eager eyes, glowing, dilating, smiling, and glancing up with a sweet, innocent pride.

She was so fresh and bright and piquant, unfolding like a flower on a summer morning. Her pretty rosy lips could smile bewitchingly and ripple in saucy speech, and now Sylvie was no longer afraid of him. He was like a father, but she had never known any fatherly love. She had said to Barbe:

“Barbe, what is a guardian, and what does he have to do?”

“Why, he takes care of your money, invests it so that it shall not get wasted or lost, and provides you with a home if you have none. When you come to have a lover he will see that the young man is a proper person, and arrange about marriage settlements——”

“But I do not mean to be married. And the house is mine——”

“All young people have guardians until they come of age. That is twenty-one in this country. I do not know about women——” looking puzzled.

“Well,” said Sylvie, deliberately, “I do not think I mind having a guardian.”

The guardian found having a ward very charming. She was merry as a mocking-bird sometimes; she played on her guitar, she sang, she tried one power after another, she fed her pets, she ordered Jaques with such a pretty air of authority that she seemed like a little queen. It was delightful to wander about with Cousin Hugh and listen to the beautiful legends he could tell. She peopled her new world with nymphs and gods turned into flowers, and tales of sunny Greece, though she was

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never quite sure whether it was a real country or not. She was never lonely any more.

Among his books he unearthed some odd volumes of poetry, two or three in English, better adapted to a young girl's understanding than the French verses. She never wearied of them.

"Why do not women write some of these beautiful verses?" she queried one day.

"Why, I do not know. They have written a few; I suppose there are many other things for them to do."

"But I haven't much to do. And I can feel all in here just like a strain of music."

She placed her small hand on her heart.

Ah, what a charming child she was! And he could not understand how Gervaise could have let her go, when he had known her all these years. To be sure, Zenobie was brilliant, and they were a merry young couple, laughing, dancing, making friends, and were fain to draw Sylvie in their circle. For New Orleans had blossomed out into the gayety of a truly French city; it had not yet been Americanized.

Sometimes Barbe felt quite troubled. For though she so often said "child" to Sylvie, and her grave guardian called her "little one," she was outgrowing both. Was it right for her to wander about so, to sit for hours in some of the delightful nooks, reading, chatting, laughing, with no chaperon? Barbe was a good deal engrossed with household cares, for both her trusty servants had been replaced by others less to her liking. Sylvie had a maid also, whose deft fingers could fashion frocks and make hats that were most bewitching. But no one could be in two places at the same time.

And then the new part was finished and furnished.

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The lower room was a kind of office and library, and Sylvie went wild over it.

"Why, it is something like that at Pointe Coupée," she cried, delightedly.

They made visits up to Pointe Coupée. M. Poydras was much in the councils of the new government, and admired Monsieur Norton's good sense and patience and his thorough understanding of the difficulties in the way. Angelique was sisterly and tender and Sylvie's favorite, though Zenobie was always begging her to come, or to join some pleasure party. And Hortense was quite as eager.

"You have always liked her so much," she said to Henri. "You ought not let such an heiress slip through your fingers."

"But you see it is so hard to have any sentiment with her. She is not thinking of lovers. And although M. de Brienne seems indifferent, he watches very closely."

"But Sylvie is full fifteen."

Yes, she was fifteen and radiant with the sweetness of youth. Other people were finding it out.

"The balls are very delightful," Sylvie said, with a yawn one morning, "and I love to dance. But I couldn't be gay all the time like Zenobie. It tires me out. I am not going anywhere for a whole week. Cousin Hugh, you must decline everything."

"But the invitations are not sent to me."

"Still, if you are my guardian——"

"But I do not want to be a tyrant."

"Oh, if you were a tyrant, I should rebel!" laughingly. "Do you not care, really? And suppose I get pale and have headaches, and my eyes grow dull, and—my hair turns gray——" she could think of nothing else.

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He laughed. There was not much prospect of it in those lovely eyes and pearly complexion.

"Mam'selle, you are not to dissipate for a whole week. You are to go to bed at nine——"

"Oh, no, ten. You will read to Barbe and me——"

"Nine, I said, Mam'selle."

"Now we will see when evening comes."

And she sat demurely with Barbe's arm about her shoulder, Barbe nodding presently, for the finely modulated voice always soothed her to a half sleep. The clock struck nine, but he was at such an interesting point that he went on. It was so everywhere. He always gave in, but her wants were so innocent and simple they could not in reason be denied. She had so many pretty whims; and some day she would go away from the old house, and, oh, how lonely it would be! He could see that admirers were casting longing eyes.

Meanwhile, many things were happening. One time, in 1812, it was "a strange sky-blue vessel" appeared at the mouth of the Mississippi. It was the first steam vessel seen, and curiosity and comment ran high. It was to be the precursor of commercial greatness, and the revolution of the carrying trade. There was war in the air and on the seas as well. New Orleans went at her pirates that had long infested the Gulf, while the whole country rose against England and her boasted right of search.

But people were full of pleasure and prosperous. There was marrying and giving in marriage. Lovers began to present their desires to Monsieur de Brienne, and more than one admirable young fellow bespoke Madame Norton's kind offices.

"Surely, Sylvie, you are not going to allow that old foolishness to interfere with your future?" said Ange-

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lique, a little sharply. "Why, you are making quite a recluse of yourself, and so young and fond of pleasure as you are."

"Foolishness! Oh, Angel, you don't mean that old fancy of my childhood! Why, it died long ago. Or, rather, I know now just what it was. I love Gervaise as much as ever, and Zenobie more than I ever thought I could. She is just the wife for him. They are young and gay and full of pleasure, but I do not want their life. You have many other things to occupy you. Are you not happy in them?"

It was true. She could not give herself up to frivolity with such a husband as Roger Norton.

But where would Sylvie ever find such a man? she wondered with true wifely appreciation. Then a curious consciousness dawned on her. Sylvie Perrier was still a child in some ways, in others a lovely, intelligent woman, different from the charming Creole women, nearer the old stock, perhaps, with strength and courage and understanding. Oh, what if——"

"Why do you look at me so, Angel. You startle me."

Angelique clasped her to her heart. "Dear," she cried in a little tremble, "wait until you love some one truly, fervently—some one to whom you can gladly give your whole soul, your whole life."

Sylvie blushed scarlet. "Yes, I shall wait," she answered. "That is the way I want to love."

War did not come very near them at first, after they had conquered the enemy at their own door. Many a wild romance has been written about those heroes of the Gulf and their marvellous exploits and escapes. But the nest at Grande Terre, with its stores, the seven cruisers of Lafitte, and the three armed schooners, were captured, and none too soon. For now there came an alarm.

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Twelve thousand British troops had sailed for Louisiana, and they were to strike at New Orleans.

The Creek War had developed a genius in the intrepid young Andrew Jackson, who came now to its defence. There was poor Fort St. Philip on the river, the Fort Petites Coquilles on the Rigolettes, Fort St. John, and some old works of twenty years ago. Generals Ross and Patterson came down the river with their meagre army. There were the brave Tennesseans under Generals Coffee and Carrol.

If there had been a wavering doubt about the Creole population, it was settled now. Pleasure-loving as they were, and strenuously as they had opposed many things in the new administration, they were no longer French or Spanish or San Domingans, but Americans.

To John Lafitte belongs much credit in this emergency. He came forward and offered his skilled artillerists, encouraged by Governor Claiborne. What a meeting it must have been between him and General Jackson in the old Cabildo, when old sins were forgiven, and conqueror and conquered were to fight side by side! The enthusiasm was grand, though it was said "they prepared as for a party of pleasure."

Hugh de Brienne had been very busy for two days. There was no loitering in the garden, no reading of delightful verse. He sat at his desk, and wrote; he sealed and directed packets, he gave instructions to Jaques and Barbe, and then ran up to the balcony, but Sylvie was not there.

"Sylvie," he said, gently; "Sylvie?"

She came out in some soft white wrap—it was a little cool. She had been crying, and yet her eyes looked only like azure lakes in their delicate mistiness.

"Oh, you are going!" she exclaimed.

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"Yes, I must go. It is for the defence of all we hold most dear, homes——"

"My home," she cried. "And for my defence."

He bowed his head.

He had thought more than once of some attractive young lover to whom he should give consent, of the wishes that would go with it, and, oh, the pang! For now Sylvie had so twined herself about his life it would be tearing up the trellis to unclasp the tendrils. Her moods of gravity were so fascinating that they made him forget the years between, their tastes were so much in unison, and her gayety was like the shining of the sun. He had put off the evil day, he had counted on years together in the old house before there was any change. Ah, he should want all the years of her sweet young life, of her blooming middle age, of her ripe, delightful after-years! It all went over him like a flash.

"If you were not brave, I should like you less," she said, proudly. "It is very hard, and yet I could not bid you stay. And you will come back. I feel it in every pulse, in every thought."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times!" What would he return to? Such a welcome as would wring his heart anew?

"And if I should not, little Sylvie, everything is arranged so that you will have no trouble. For the house is yours, you know, and there is plenty——"

"Oh, oh! What should I want of anything if you were gone!" she cried in a passion of anguish. "I should want to die too. Angelique and Gervaise might have it all. I should pine away in some of the nooks we have loved so well. If you are not coming back, I shall not let you go."

She was in his arms then, and her golden head lay on

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his breast. The little sob that shook her pierced his very heart.

"Sylvie, Sylvie, this is love such as a man feels for the woman he wants to take into his keeping forever. When it first came I cannot tell, but it has been in my heart a long time. I am a poor man, and you are rich; I am so much older, and your life is just unfolding, you are beautiful—it is not fair——"

"The fortune you won for me, and as for the youth and beauty—well, they will both fade. No doubt, I shall be old and ugly some day, and you shall tell me of it; then we will be even. We shall always go on in this old house, and if you love me——"

She raised her face and smiled divinely out of tenderest eyes and rosy lips.

"Oh, Sylvie, Sylvie, think before you make that old tie come true! For I can never give you up again. I may even torment you with a jealous love, as if I were ten years younger. I may ask so much of your youth and sweetness——"

"You cannot ask too much," she interrupted, quickly. "It is all yours—all; and if I had a thousand times more, it should be yours."

"And I must go."

"Yes, you must go at once. For if you stay, all my bravery will die out, and I shall keep you and be forever ashamed of myself. Oh, yes, go!"

But he had to unclasp the little hands, and he kissed down in the sweet rosy mouth that gave him so much in return that it took almost superhuman courage to say farewell.

The narrow old streets were full of excitement. The French residents, largely Creoles now, had their "Marseil-

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laise" and "Le Chant du Départ." It blended with "Yankee Doodle" and other airs. Women crowded the windows and balconies, and cheered sons and brothers as they went by. Their hearts were not all dancing and frivolity.

And although they came to know afterward that much of it might have been spared, the moral victory was worth it all. Of that grand January 8, many a song has been sung, many a tale told. And when the last of the enemy, not less brave than their conquerors, left the shores of Lake Borgne, after their signal defeat, shouts rent the air, and every head was bared to the sagacious and brilliant young general who was later on to govern the whole country.

The enthusiasm in the Place d'Armes knew no bounds. Arches and banners and pennons of all the peoples who made up the city floated everywhere. Houses were illuminated with colored lanterns. And, oh, the flowers! It might have been midsummer instead of midwinter. The columns of troops went by, flower-crowned with the rain of blossoms that showered from every window. Salvos of artillery greeted them, for there was cause for very little mourning. Six killed and seven wounded, and New Orleans stood next to the two grand naval victories that had distinguished the War of 1812.

The old cathedral was crowded. People knelt in the aisles and on the steps with husbands and brothers and sons; and there were no words brave and beautiful and grateful enough for the thanksgiving.

One small figure in gray, veiled, stood on the steps, watching. And when a tall soldier, a volunteer without much military adornment, was walking reverentially in, realizing that he had much to thank God for, a little

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hand was slipped in his, and they elbowed their way together to the very steps of the chancel and knelt in solemn betrothal.

After that old New Orleans almost faded away, as one might say. In the sunshine of prosperity the streets ran swiftly out in the fields, the thickets and swamps were cleared up. Steamboats went up and down the river. The great Gulf was dotted with commerce, the docks and wharves and levees pushed out over reclaimed marshes. Houses and stores and improvements of all kinds went on. They were so busy they could hardly pause for intellectual advancement. Their sons went to Paris for education, and their literature had few opportunities for development.

But it came at last. Busy pens found the romance and poetry hidden away in hundreds of places, needing only to be brought to light. All the way along from the day De Bienville planted his city, all the first two hundred years of its existence is marked by legendary treasures that later poets and romancers and historians have unearthed. Few places can boast of so much striking interest.

And to-day, amid all of its magnificent improvements and grandeur, many of the old places are still recalled and cherished. The French aspect lingers. It is unlike any other city.

Roger Norton served it for several years, and then the general government, finding him trustworthy and of good, sound sense, employed him in several capacities, sending him presently to Paris. And while they were there Hugh de Brienne overcame his wife's fears, and they made the journey with no misadventure. The old château had been transformed into a convent, but they found the room in which the child Sylvie was married to some one across

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the great ocean, then to be married again in the cathedral—she would have it so, even if it was not her Church, for it was here she gave thanks for her lover's return. The old house and garden where she had passed her childhood was always dear to them both.

That was nearly a hundred years ago, and they have all vanished, leaving sweet memories behind.

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